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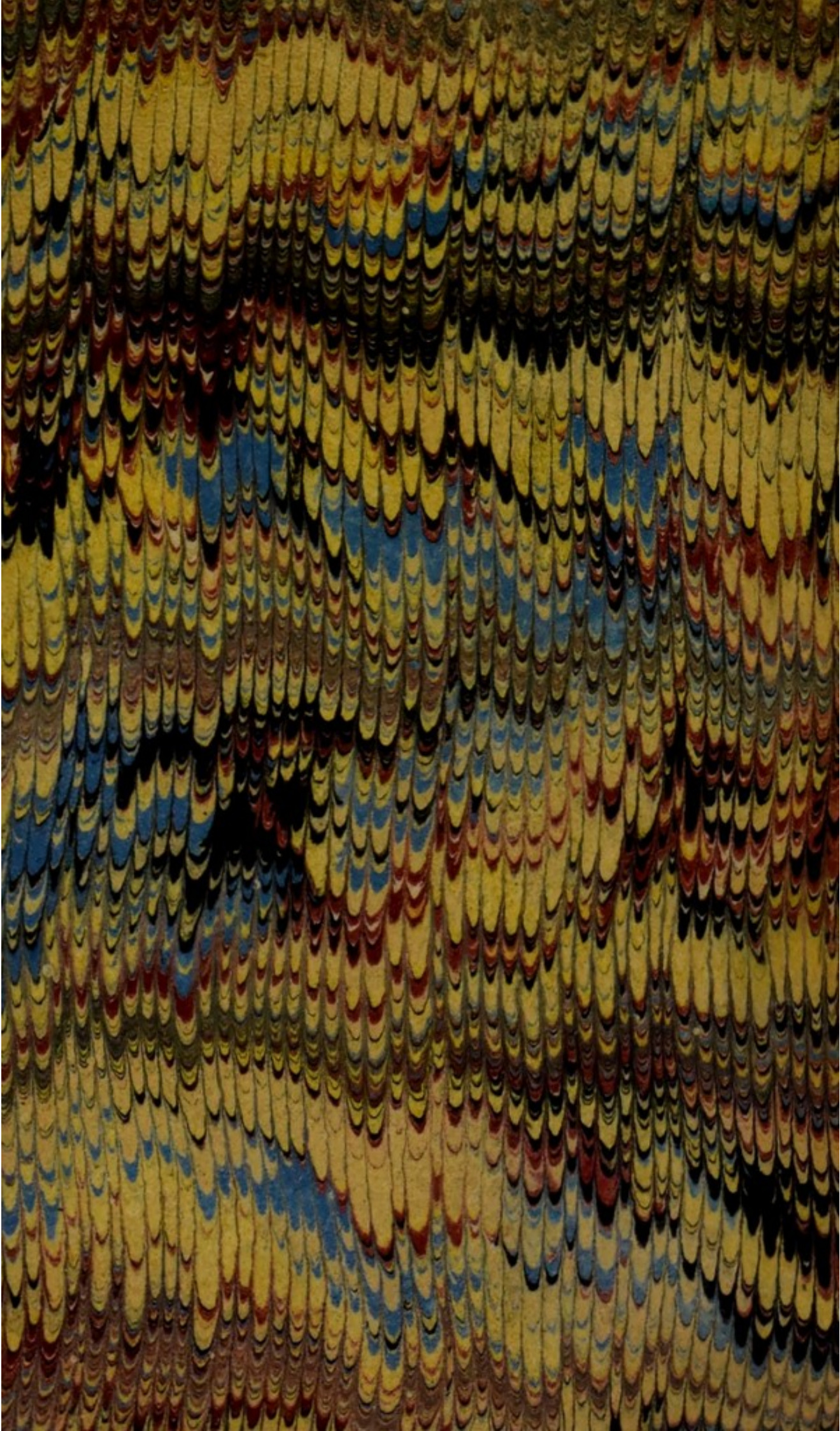
GRAMMAR SCHOOL
SECOND PRIZE
FOR
ARITHMETIC.
NEWCASTLE

By John Arkin



Fenton.

George T. Jukes & Co.
Goldsmiths & Silversmiths
of Aston Road, Birmingham
BIRMINGHAM.

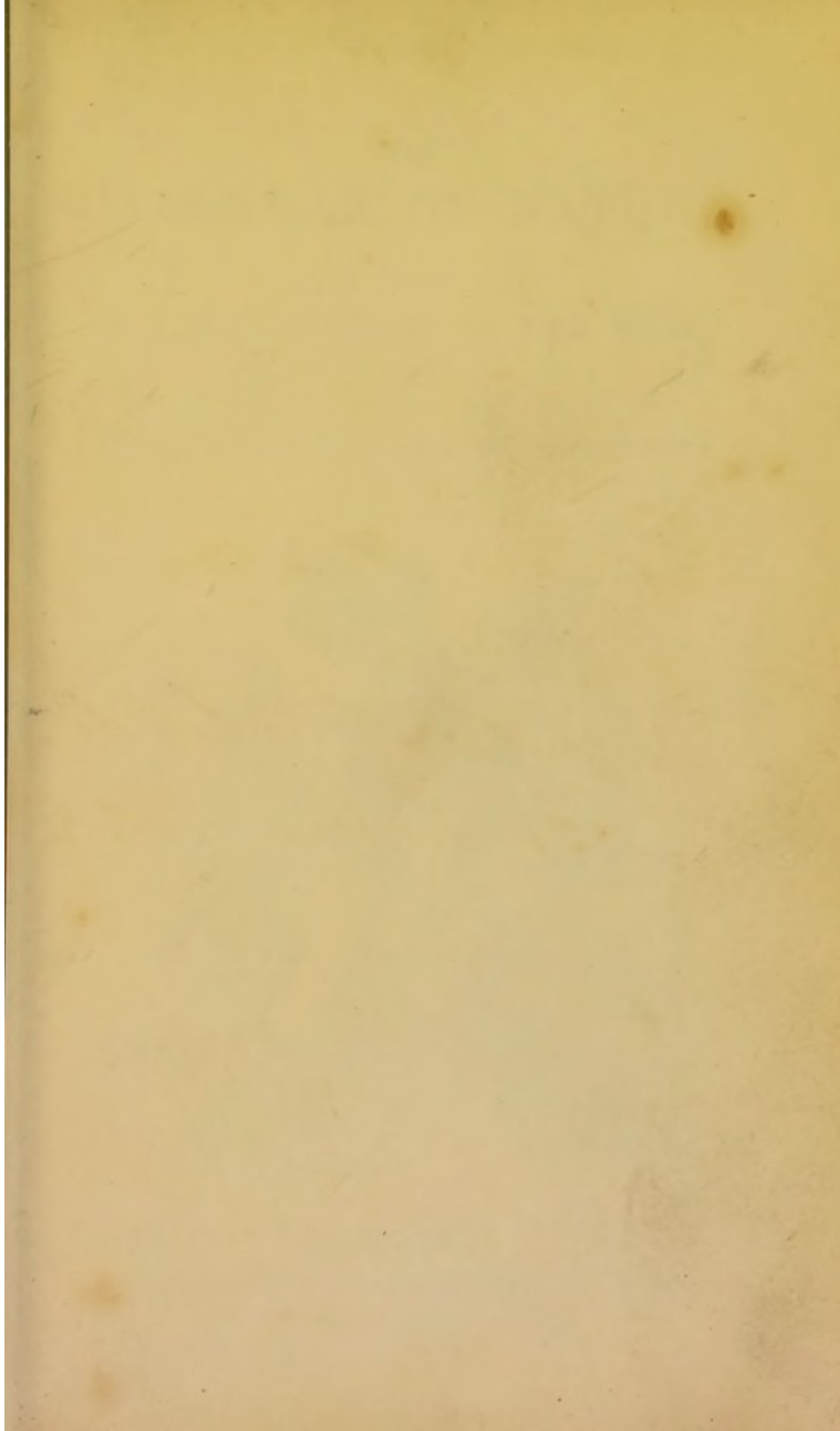


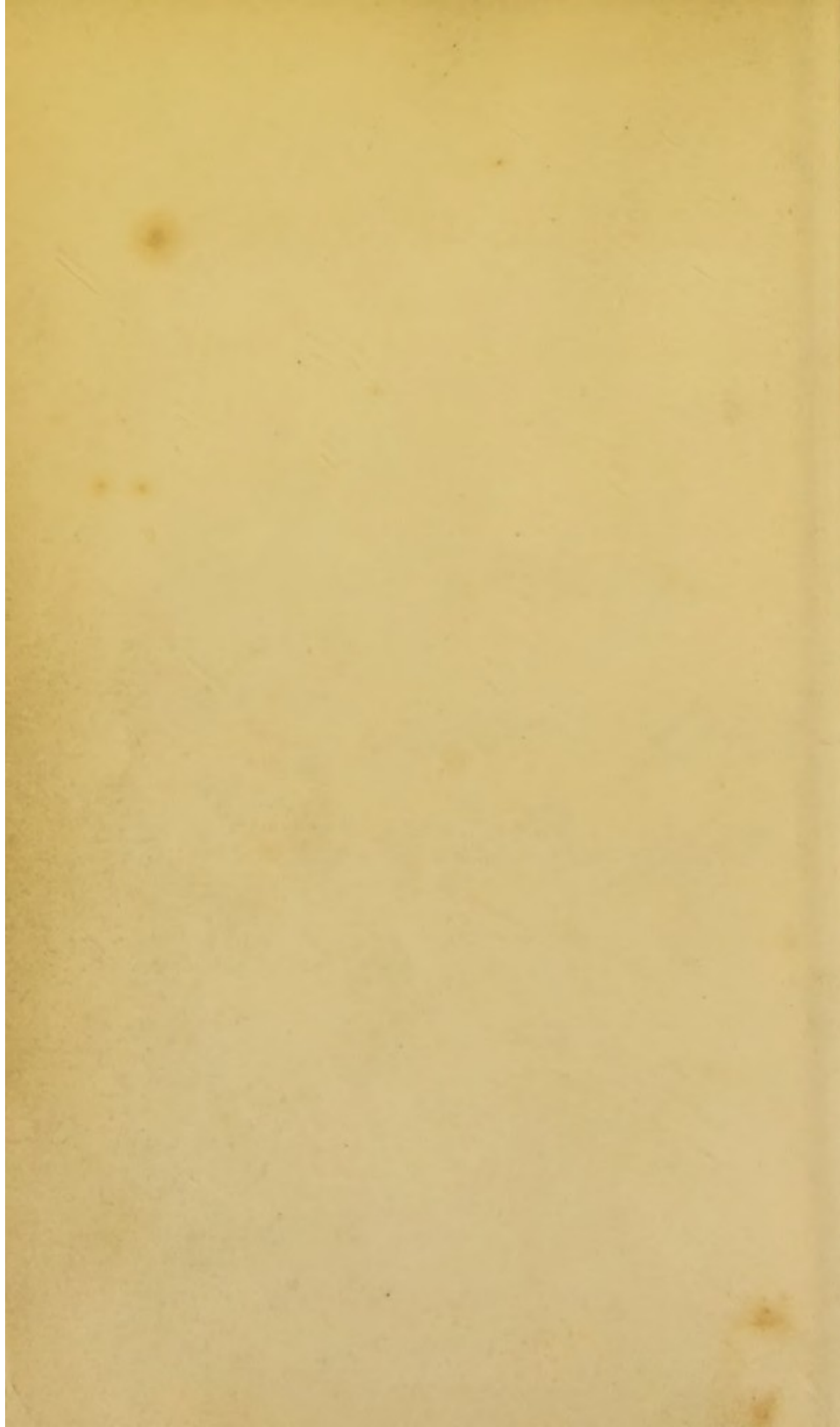
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Edward Fenton

3 / from J. F. Clark.

20 Decem^r 1836





THE
CALENDAR OF NATURE;
OR,
NATURAL HISTORY OF THE YEAR.

WITH DESIGNS BY GEORGE CATTERMOLLE.



LONDON:
J. VAN VOORST, 3, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCXXXIV.



LONDON:
PRINTED BY MANNING AND SMITHSON,
IVY LANE, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE well-established reputation of this little volume, and the increasing disposition to the study of Natural History, have been the reasons for putting forth this new edition. No attempt has been made to alter its plan, or to deviate from the clear and simple manner in which the different occurrences are narrated ;—a few corrections have been made, which subsequent information has brought to light, on some of the subjects ; and a few additions, in the history of several of the months.

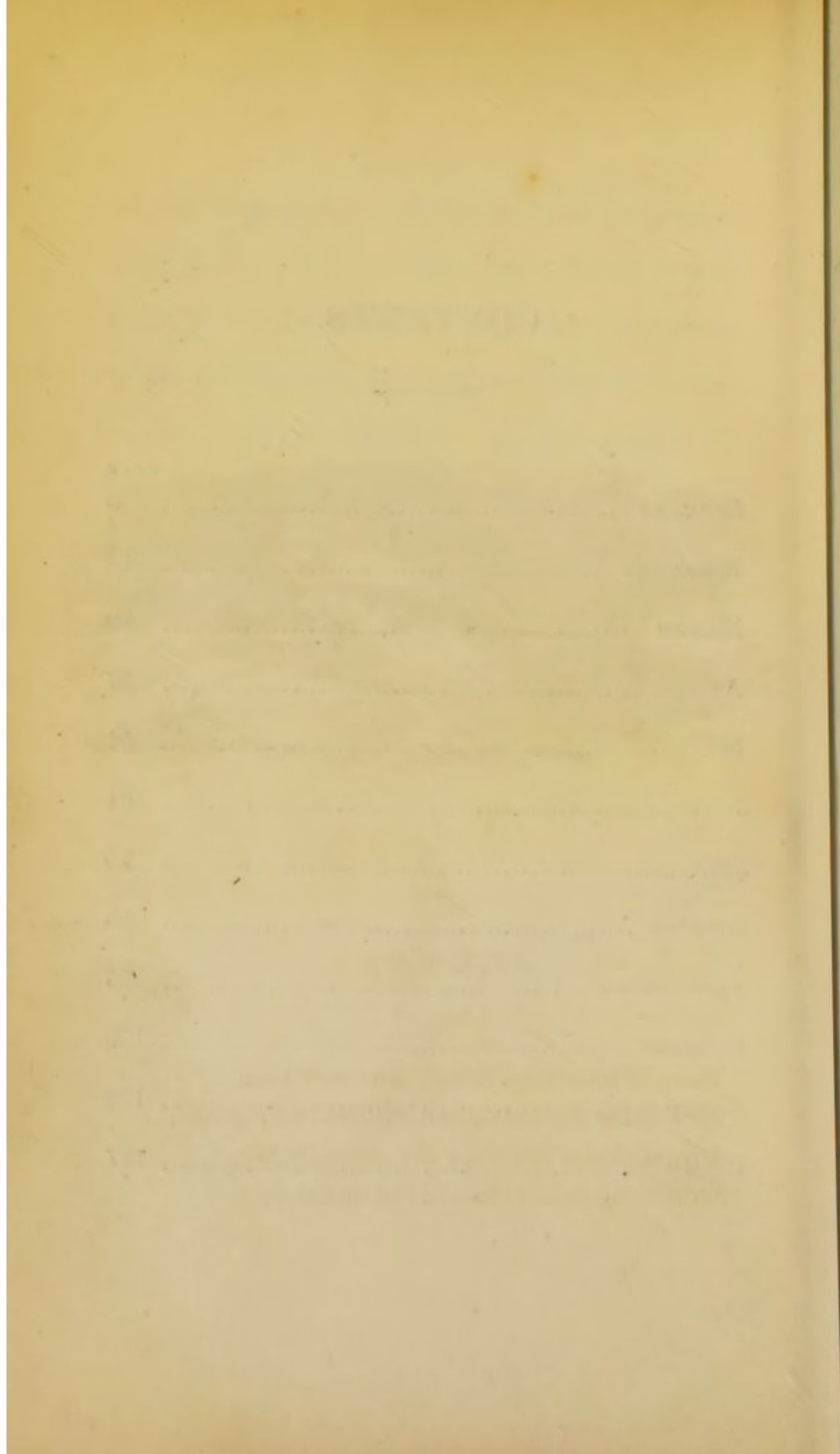
The object of the volume being to draw the attention of the Young Naturalist to the

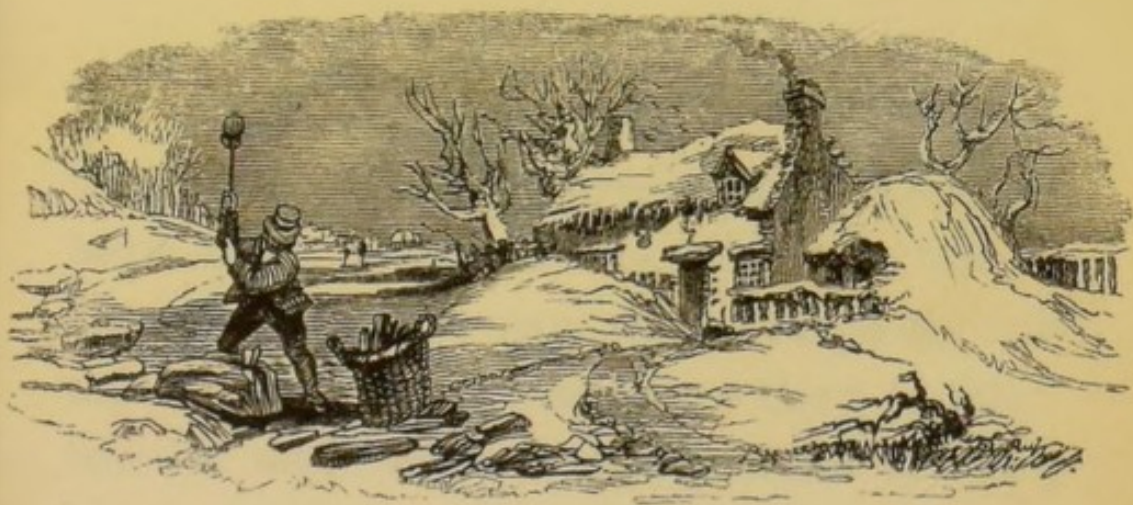
various appearances of Nature, he is recommended to interleave this little work,—upon which he will be enabled to make his own notes of the arrivals and departures of the feathered creation, the insect tribe, and the glories of Flora's train; and thus it will serve as a pleasant memorial of his observations on the works of the great Creator.

M.

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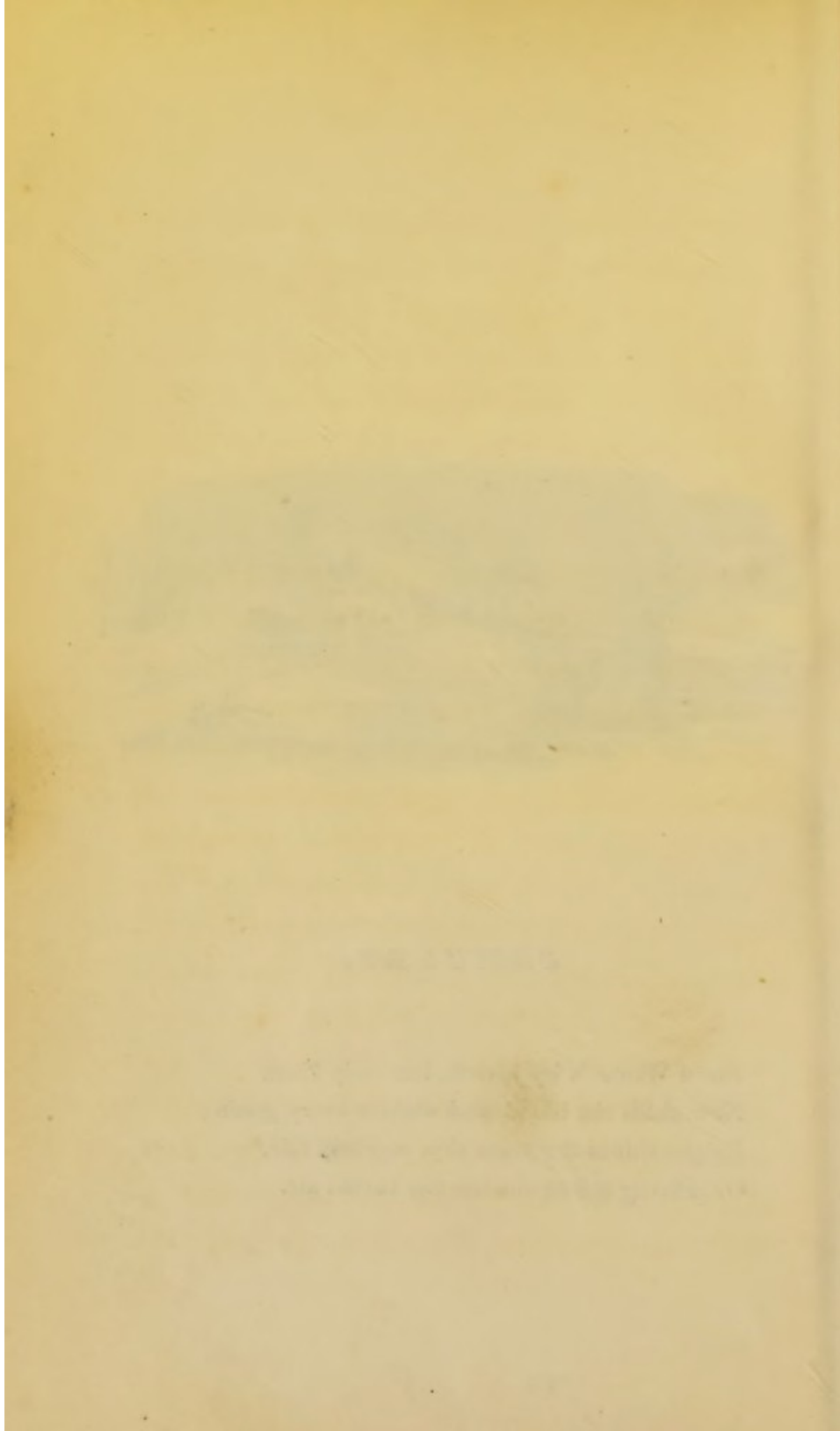
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JANUARY.

Stern Winter's icy breath, intensely keen,
Now chills the blood, and withers every green ;
Bright shines the azure sky, serenely fair,
Or driving snows obscure the turbid air.



JANUARY.

CIVILISED nations in general now agree to begin reckoning the new year from the first of January. Yet it may seem strange to call that a new season, when every thing is most inactive and lifeless ; when animals are benumbed by the cold, and vegetables are all dead or withered. For this reason, some have thought it best to begin the year in Spring, when the face of nature is really renewed. But, as this happens at different times in different years and climates, it has at length been determined to date the commencement of the year, as at present, within a few days after the winter-solstice, or shortest day. This always takes place on the twenty-first of December ; and from that time the days are gradually

lengthened, till the middle of summer ; so that the year may properly be said to be now turned.

January, which now stands the first in the calendar, was so placed by Numa Pompilius, when he added it, together with February, to Romulus's year : its name is supposed to be derived from the Latin word *janua*, a gate ; and as Janus was considered by the Romans to preside over the gates of heaven, the name of the month is supposed to have reference to the opening of a new era, or renewal of time. The Saxons denominated this month, "*Wolf-monat* ; because people were always, in that month, more in danger of being devoured by wolves than in any season else of the year ; for that, through the extremity of cold and snow, those ravenous creatures could not find other beasts sufficient to feed upon."

January is the coldest month in this part of the world ; and in England we seldom have much frost or snow before it. The weather is commonly either clear dry frost, or fog and snow, with rain now and then intermixed.

Nothing can be more wonderful than the

effects of frost. To see the running stream stopped in its course—the lake, that was curled by every breeze, converted into a firm plain—the moist ground dried up, and made as hard as rock ; and all this done by an invisible power, in the space of a single night, would be infinitely surprising to one unaccustomed to the sight. These effects are painted in a very lively manner by THOMSON, in his “SEASONS.”

An icy gale, oft shifting o'er the pool,
Breathes a blue film, and in its mid career
Arrests the bickering storm.
Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects
A double noise ; while at his evening watch,
The village dog deters the nightly thief ;
The heifer lows ; the distant water-fall
Swells in the breeze ; and with the hasty tread
Of traveller, the hollow-sounding plain
Shakes from afar.

It freezes on,
Till Morn, late rising o'er the drooping world,
Lifts her pale eye, unjoyous. Then appears
The various labour of the silent night :
Prone from the dripping eave, and dumb cascade,
Whose idle torrents only seem to roar,
The pendant icicle, the frost-work fair,
Where transient hues and fancied figures rise ;
Wide-spouted o'er the hill, the frozen brook,
A livid tract, cold gleaming on the morn.

Water, when frozen, is expanded; that is, takes up more room than before: hence, ice is lighter than water, and swims upon it. From this cause, if a bottle full of water, hard-corked, be set to freeze, the bottle will be broken, for want of room for the expansion of the water. Water-pipes often burst from the same cause, and hoops fly off from barrels; nay, even a gun-barrel or a cannon, filled with water, and screwed up at the muzzle, has been burst in an intense frost.

This is also one cause of destruction in buildings formed of stone that is soft and porous, from the expansion of the water imbibed: the effects of this operation may be seen in the stone used for building Blackfriar's bridge, and also in some of the colleges at Oxford.

The same property produces a very beneficial effect to the husbandman; for the hard clods of the ploughed fields are loosened, and broken to pieces by the swelling of the water within them when frozen. Hence the earth is crumbled, and prepared for receiving the seed in Spring.

Snow, is the water of clouds, frozen. On a close examination, it is found to be all composed of icy darts, or stars. Its whiteness is owing to the small particles into which it is divided. Ice, when pounded, becomes equally white. Snow is very useful, by covering the plants, and protecting them from the severity of the frost ; for, at a certain depth under the snow, the cold always continues the same. It is also thought to enrich the ground, and serve as a sort of manure ; but some suppose it not at all different from rain in this respect. The beauty of a country all clothed in new-fallen snow is very striking :

The cherished fields
Put on their winter-robe of purest white.
'T is brightness all ; save where the new snow melts
Along the mazy current. Low the woods
Bow their hoar head ; and, ere the languid sun,
Faint from the west emits his evening ray,
Earth's universal face, deep hid, and chill,
Is one wide dazzling waste, that buries wide
The works of man. THOMSON.

Hail-stones are drops of rain, suddenly congealed into a hard mass, so as to preserve their

figure. These often fall in warmer seasons of the year, as even then the upper regions of the atmosphere are very cold.

Hoar-frost, is dew or mist, frozen. It adheres to every object on which it falls, and produces figures of incomparable beauty and elegance. Every twig and blade of grass is beset by it with innumerable glittering pearly drops, or silvery plumage, beyond the skill of any artist to imitate.

Sometimes it happens that a sudden shower of rain falls during a frost, and immediately turns to ice; a remarkable scene is then produced, which the following lines most beautifully describe :

Ere yet the clouds let fall the treasured snow,
Or winds begun through hazy skies to blow,
At evening, a keen eastern breeze arose,
And the descending rain unsullied froze.
Soon as the silent shades of night withdrew,
The ruddy Morn disclosed at once to view
The face of Nature in a rich disguise,
And brightened every object to my eyes :
For, every shrub, and every blade of grass,
And every pointed thorn, seemed wrought in glass ;
In pearls and rubies rich, the hawthorns show ;
While through the ice, the crimson berries glow ;

The thick-sprung reeds the watery marshes yield,
Seem polished lances in a hostile field.
The stag, in limped currents, with surprise,
Sees crystal branches on his forehead rise.
The spreading oak, the beech, and towering pine,
Glazed over, in the freezing ether shine.
The frightened birds the rattling branches shun,
That wave and glitter in the distant sun.
When, if a sudden gust of wind arise,
The brittle forest into atoms flies;
The cracking wood beneath the tempest bends,
And in a spangled shower the prospect ends.

PHILIPS, *Lett. from Copenhagen.*

In such a case, prodigious mischief has been done in the woods by the breaking down of vast arms of trees, which were overloaded by the weight of the ice encrusting them.

The inclemency of the season is shewn by its effects on animals, particularly on the numerous tribes of birds. As the cold advances, they collect in flocks, quit their retreats, and, rendered bold by want, approach the habitations of man. Larks and other small birds shelter themselves in the warm stubble. Sparrows, yellow-hammers, and chaffinches, crowd into the farm-yards, and attend the barn-doors, to pick their scanty fare from the chaff and straw.

The red-breast ventures into the house,

—————and pays to trusted man
His annual visit.

Fieldfares and thrushes, in large flocks, descend from the tops of trees, and frequent the warm manured fields in the neighbourhood of towns. Snipes, woodcocks, wild ducks, and other water-fowl, are forced from the frozen marshes, and obliged to seek their food about the rapid currents of streams which are yet unfrozen. As the cold grows more intense, various kinds of sea fowl quit the bleak open shores, and come up the rivers, where they offer an unusual prey to the fowler.

The wild quadrupeds, too, are driven from their accustomed remote haunts. Hares enter the gardens, to browse on the cultivated vegetables; and leaving their tracks in the snow, are frequently hunted down, or caught in snares. The hen-roosts are pillaged by foxes, polecats, and other small beasts of prey which our country produces; but we are happily unacquainted with the ravenous troops of wolves,

bears, and other fierce creatures, which, urged by famine at this season, often terrify the villages in the mountainous and woody regions on the continent.

The domestic cattle now require all the care and protection of the farmer. Sheep are often lost in sudden storms, by which the snow is drifted in the hollows, so as to bury them a great depth beneath it; yet they have been known to survive many days in this situation. Cows, with difficulty, scratch up a few mouthfuls of grass; but for their chief subsistence, they must depend upon the hay and other provision of the farm-yard. Early lambs and calves are kept within doors, and tended with as much care as the farmer's own children.

Now, shepherds, to your helpless charge be kind;
Baffle the raging year, and fill their pens
With food at will: lodge them below the storm,
And watch them strict; for, from the bellowing east,
In this dire season, oft the whirlwind's wing
Sweeps up the burthen of whole wintry plains
At one wide waft, and o'er the hapless flocks,
Hid in the hollow of two neighbouring hills,
The billowy tempest whelms; 'till upward urged,
The valley to a shining mountain swells,
Tipt with a wreath high-curling in the sky.—THOMSON.

The plants at this season are provided by nature with a kind of winter-quarters, which secure them from the effects of cold. Those called herbaceous, which die down to the root every autumn, are now safely concealed under ground, preparing their new shoots, to burst forth when the earth is softened by spring. Shrubs and trees, which are exposed to the open air, have all their soft and tender parts closely wrapt up in buds, which, by their firmness, resist all the force of frost. If one of these buds be carefully opened, it is found to consist of young leaves rolled together, within which are even all the blossoms in miniature, which are afterwards to adorn the spring. Some of these are much forwarder than others. The leaves of the woodbine appear just ready to expand by the end of the month; the flowers of the mezereon and snowdrop seem on the point of blowing; and the catkin, or male flower-bunch of the hazel, begins to unfold.

During the severity of the frost, little work can be done out of doors by the husbandman. As soon as it sets in, he takes the opportunity of

the hardness of the ground to draw manure to his fields. He lops and cuts timber, and mends thorn-hedges. When the roads become smooth from the frozen snow, he takes his team and carries hay and corn to market, or brings coals for himself and neighbours. The barn resounds with the flail, by the use of which the labourer is enabled to defy the cold weather.

The red-breast, and several other smaller birds, may be heard uttering a cheerful note during this season; larks also congregate, and rooks resort to their nest-trees; and occasionally, on fine days, the peacock and tortoiseshell butterflies may be seen on the wing.

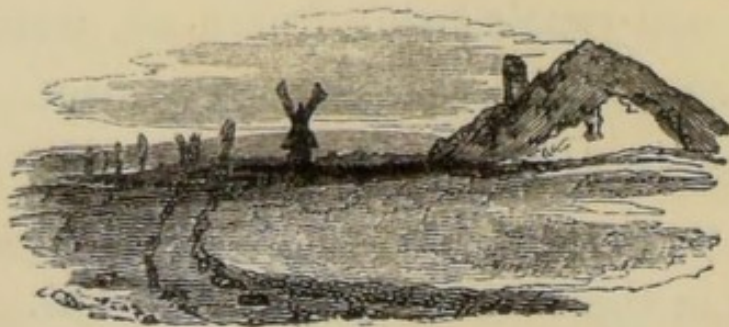
In towns, the poor are pinched for fuel and food, and charity is peculiarly called for at this comfortless time of the year. Many trades are at a stand, during the severity of the frost. Rivers and canals being frozen up, watermen and bargemen are without employment. The harbours in this island, however, are never locked up by the ice, as they are for many months in the northern parts of Europe.

The amusements of sliding, skating, and

other pastimes on the ice, give life to this dreary season; but our frosts are not continued and steady enough to afford us such a share of these diversions as some other nations enjoy.

Where the Rhine
Branched out in many a long canal extends,
From every province swarming, void of care,
Batavia rushes forth; and as they sweep,
On sounding skates, a thousand different ways,
In circling poise, swift as the winds along,
The then gay land is maddened all to joy.
Nor less the northern courts, wide o'er the snow,
Pour a new pomp. Eager, on rapid sleds,
Their vigorous youth, in bold contention wheel
The long resounding course. Mean time, to raise
The manly strife, with highly blooming charms,
Flushed by the season, Scandinavia's dames,
Or Russia's buxom daughters, glow around.

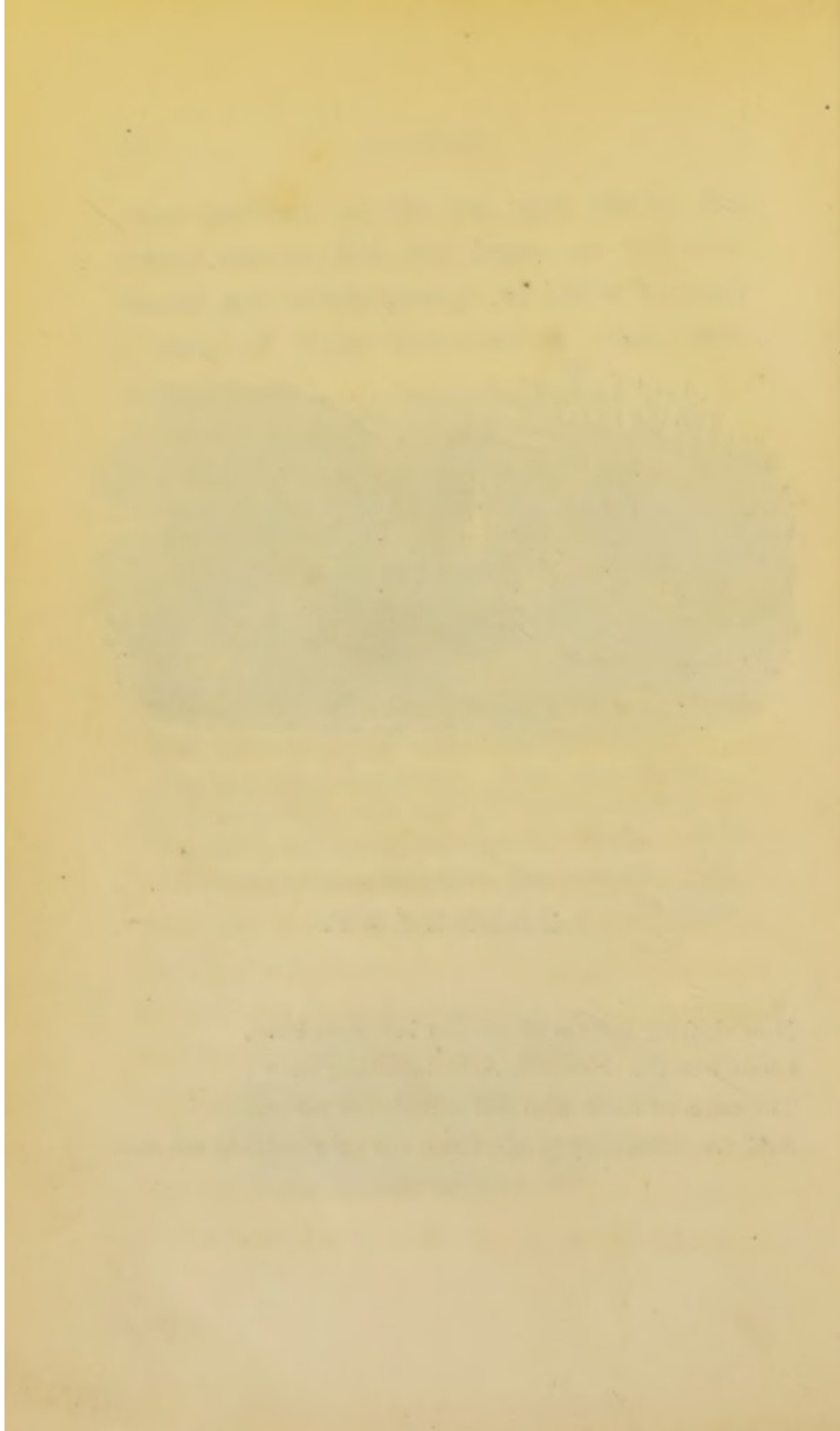
THOMSON.





FEBRUARY.

Now shifting gales with mildest influence blow,
Cloud o'er the skies, and melt the falling snow ;
The softened earth with fertile moisture teems,
And, freed from icy bonds, down rush the swelling streams.



FEBRUARY.

So named from *Februa*, *Februaca*, or *Februalis*; names of Juno. Our Saxon ancestors named it *Sprout-kele*; meaning by kele, the kele-wurt, called by us, cole-wurt: a herb in great use amongst our forefathers.

The earlier part of this month may still be reckoned winter; although the cold generally begins to abate. The days are now sensibly lengthened; and the sun has power enough gradually to melt away the snow and ice. Sometimes, a sudden thaw comes on with a south wind and rain, which all at once dissolves the snow. Torrents of water then descend from the hills; every little brook and rill is

swelled to a large stream ; and the ice is swept away with great violence from the rivers.

Muttering, the winds at eve, with blunted point,
Blow hollow-blustering from the south. Subdued,
The frost resolves into a trickling thaw.
Spotted, the mountains shine ; loose sleet descends,
And floods the country round. The rivers swell,
Of bonds impatient. Sudden from the hills,
O'er rocks and woods, in broad brown cataracts,
A thousand snow-fed torrents shoot at once ;
And where they rush, the wide-resounding plain
Is left one slimy waste. THOMSON.

The frost, however, returns for a time ; the fresh snow falls, often in great quantities ; and thus the weather alternately changes during most part of this month.

Various signs of returning spring occur at different times in February. The woodlark, one of the earliest and sweetest songsters, often begins his note at the very entrance of the month. Not long after, rooks begin to pair, and geese to lay. The thrush and chaffinch then add to the early music of the groves. Near the close of the month, partridges begin to couple, and repair the ravages committed

on this devoted species during the autumn and winter; ravens commence building their nests; the brimstone butterfly, and several moths, make their appearance.

Moles go to work in throwing up their hillocks as soon as the earth is softened. Under some of the largest, a little below the surface of the earth, they make their nests of moss, in which four or five young are found at a time. These animals live on worms, insects, and the roots of plants. They do much mischief in gardens, by loosening and devouring flower-roots; but in the fields they seem to do no other damage than rendering the surface of the ground unequal by their hillocks, which obstruct the scythe in mowing. They are said also to pierce the sides of dams and canals, and let out the water.

Many plants emerge from under ground in February, but few flowers as yet adorn the fields or gardens. Snowdrops generally are fully opened from the beginning of the month, often peeping out from the snow. The broom flowers in this month, and also the yew tree.

Already now the snow-drop dares appear,
The first pale blossom of the unripened year:
As Flora's breath, by some transforming power,
Had changed an icicle into a flower;
Its name and hue the scentless plant retains,
And winter lingers in its icy veins.

MRS. BARBAULD.

The alder-tree discloses its flower-buds.
The catkins of the hazel become very conspicuous in the hedges. Young leaves are budding on the gooseberries and currants about the end of the month.

The farmer is impatient to begin his work in the fields as soon as the ground is sufficiently thawed. He ploughs up his fallows; sows beans and peas, rye, and spring-wheat; sets early potatoes; drains his wet land; dresses and repairs hedges; lops trees, and plants those kinds which thrive best in a wet soil, as poplars and willows.



MARCH.

Winter, still lingering on the verge of Spring,
Retires reluctant, and from time to time,
Looks back, while at his keen and chilling breath
Fair Flora sickens.



Winter, still lingering on the verge of Spring,
Lies in reluctant, and from time to time
Looks back, while at his feet and chilling feet
The snows lie thick.

MARCH.

MARCH, so named by Romulus, from the heathen deity, Mars; by our Saxon ancestors, *Length-Moneth*, because the days began in length to exceed the nights.

The great operations of nature during this month seem to be, to dry up the superabundant moisture of February, thereby preventing the roots and seeds from rotting in the earth; and gradually to bring forward the process of evolution in the swelling buds, whilst, at the same time, by the wholesome severity of chilling blasts, they are kept from a premature disclosure, which would expose their tender contents to injury from the yet unsettled season.

This effect is beautifully touched upon in a simile of Shakspeare's—

And like the tyrannous breathing of the north,
Checks all our buds from blowing.

This seeming tyranny, however, is to be regarded as the most useful discipline; and those years generally prove most fruitful, in which the pleasing appearances of spring are the latest.

The sun has now acquired so much power, that on a clear day we often feel all the genial influence of spring, though the naked shrubs and trees still give the landscape the comfortless appearance of winter. But soft, pleasant weather in the month of March, is seldom of long duration :

As yet the trembling year is unconfirmed;
And Winter oft at eve resumes the breeze,
Chills the pale Morn, and bids his driving sleets
Deform the day delightless.

As soon as a few dry days have made the land fit for working, the farmer goes to the

plough; and, if the fair weather continue, proceeds to sowing oats and barley; though this business is seldom finished till the next month. The importance of a dry season for getting the seed early and favourably into the ground, is expressed in the old proverb,

A bushel of March dust is worth a king's ransom.

The mellow note of the throstle, who sings perched on the naked bough of some lofty tree, is heard from the beginning of the month: at the same time, the ring-dove cooes in the woods. The lesser white-throat, and the chiff-chaff, arrive towards the end of the month. The rookery is now all in motion, with the pleasing labour of building and repairing nests; and highly amusing it is, to observe the tricks and artifices of the thievish tribe, some to defend, and others to plunder, the materials of their new habitations. These birds are accused of doing much injury to the farmer, by plucking up the young corn, and other springing vegetables; but some think this mischief fully

repaid by their diligence in picking up the grubs of various insects, which, if suffered to grow to maturity, would occasion much greater damage. For this purpose, they are frequently seen following the plough, or settling in flocks on newly turned-up lands.

“Rooks,” says an intelligent observer of nature, “appear to have a language amongst themselves, which is understood by the whole community; and a peculiar note, from a bird set to watch and to warn them of approaching danger, is quite sufficient to make them take flight, and always in an opposite direction to that from which the danger is apprehended.”

Some birds, which took refuge in our temperate climate from the rigour of the northern winters, now begin to leave us, and return to the countries where they were bred. The red-wing thrush, fieldfare, and woodcock, are of this kind; and they retire to spend their summer in Norway, Sweden, and other parts of the north. It may be considered a rule almost without exception in this country, that all our

winter visitors come from the north, and all our summer visitors from the south.

The gannets, or soland geese, resort during this month to those Scotch isles where they breed, in such numbers, as to cover almost the whole surface of the ground with their eggs and young.

Frogs, which during winter lie in a torpid state at the bottoms of ponds or ditches, are enlivened by the warmth of spring, and early in this month rise to the surface of the water in vast numbers. They are at first very timorous, and dive to the bottom with great quickness as one approaches; but in the coupling season they become bolder, and make themselves heard to a great distance by their croaking.

Those most elegant fish, smelts or sparlings, begin to run up the rivers in this month, in order to spawn. They are of so tender a nature, that the least mixture of snow water in the river will drive them back again to the sea.

But nothing in the animal creation is a more

pleasing spectacle, than the sporting of the young lambs, most of which are yeaned during this month, and are trusted abroad when the weather is tolerably mild. Dyer, in his poem of "The Fleece," gives a very natural and beautiful description of this circumstance :

Spread around thy tenderest diligence
In flowery spring-time, when the new-dropt lamb,
Tottering with weakness by his mother's side,
Feels the fresh world about him, and each thorn,
Hillock, or furrow, trips his feeble feet:
Oh! guard his meek sweet innocence from all
The innumerable ills that rush around his life!
Mark the quick kite, with beak and talons prone,
Circling the skies to snatch him from the plain!
Observe the lurking crows! beware the brake,
There the sly fox the careless minute waits!
Nor trust thy neighbour's dog, nor earth, nor sky:
Thy bosom to a thousand cares divide!
Eurus oft slings his hail; the tardy fields
Pay not their promised food; and oft the dam
O'er her weak twins with empty udder mourns,
Or fails to guard, when the bold bird of prey
Alights, and hops in many turns around,
And tires her, also turning: to her aid
Be nimble, and the weakest, in thine arms,
Gently convey to the warm cote; and oft,

Between the lark's note and the nightingale's,
His hungry bleating still with tepid milk :
In this soft office may thy children join,
And charitable habits learn in sport :
Nor yield him to himself, ere vernal airs
Sprinkle thy little croft with daisy flowers.

Another most agreeable token of the arrival of spring is, that the bees begin to venture out of their hives about the middle of this month. As their food is the honey-like juice found in the tubes of flowers, their coming abroad is a certain sign that flowers are now to be met with. No creature seems possessed of a greater power of foreseeing the state of the weather:—so that their appearance in the morning may be reckoned a sure token of a fair day.

“My bees, (says Mr. Jesse,*) are a constant source of amusement to me; and the more I study them, the more I am led to admire their sagacity. Few things, however, surprise me more, than the power which they possess of communicating what I can only call intelli-

* Gleanings of Natural History.

gence to each other. This I observe to be almost invariably the case, before they swarm. Some scouts may then be observed to leave the hive, and for some time to hover round a particular bush, or branch of a tree; after which, they return to the hive. In a little while, the new swarm quits it, and settles on the branch which had been previously fixed upon by the scouts. The same power of communication may be observed in the ant. I have often put a small green caterpillar near an ants' nest; you may see it immediately seized by one of the ants, which after several ineffectual efforts to drag it to its nest will quit it, go up to another ant, and they will appear to hold a conversation together by means of their antennæ, after which they will return together to the caterpillar, and, by their united efforts, drag it where they wish to deposit it.

“Each crawling insect holds a rank important in the plan of Him who framed this scale of beings.”

The speckled wood-butterfly, the green

rose-chaffer, and the humming-bird hawk-moth, are also on the wing.

The gardens are now rendered gay by the crocuses, which adorn the borders with a rich mixture of the brightest yellow and purple. The little shrubs of mezereon are in their beauty. The fields look green with the springing grass, but few wild flowers as yet appear to decorate the ground: daisies, however, begin to be sprinkled over the dry pastures. This flower is a great favourite with our poets: Mr. Wordsworth's lines are in all probability familiar to the reader—the following beautiful lines are from one of our early poets:

Her* divine skill taught me this,
That from every thing I saw
I could some instruction draw,
And raise pleasure to the height,
Through the meanest objects' sight.
By the murmur of a spring,
Or the least bough's rustelling ;
By a daisy, whose leaves spread,
Shut when Titan goes to bed ;

* His muse.

Or a shady bush or tree ;
She could more infuse in me
Than all nature's beauties can,
In some other wiser man.

G. WITHERS.

And the moist banks of ditches are enlivened with the glossy star-like yellow flowers of the pilewort.

Towards the end of the month primroses begin to peep out beneath the hedges ;— and that most delightfully fragrant of all flowers, the violet, discovers itself by the perfume it imparts to the surrounding air, before the eye has perceived it in its lowly bed. Shakspeare compares an exquisitely sweet strain of music, to the delicious scent of this flower :

Oh ! it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour.

There are several kinds of violets ; but the fragrant (both blue and white) is the earliest—

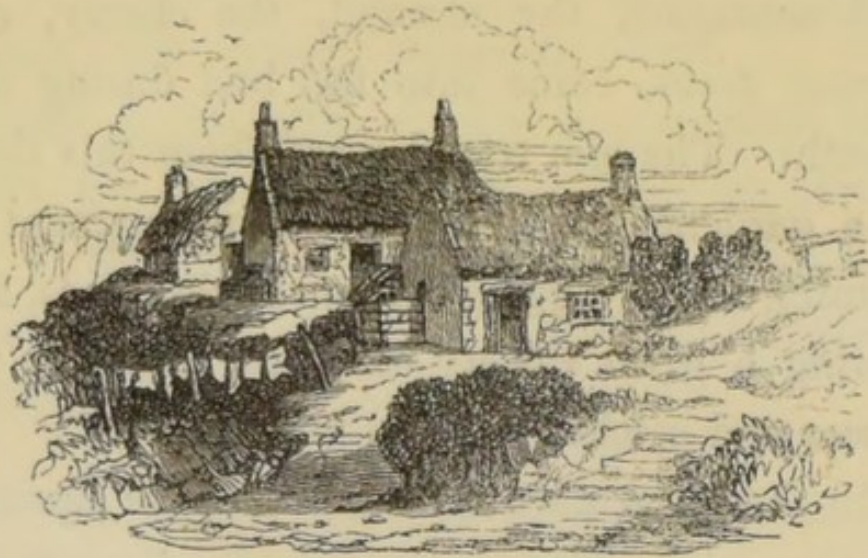
thence called the March violet. To these flowers, Shakspeare adds the daffodil,

Which comes before the swallow dares, and takes
The winds of March with beauty.

Besides the hazel, the sallow now enlivens the hedges with its catkins full of yellow dust; and the alder trees are covered with a kind of black bunches, which are the male and female flowers. The leaves of honey-suckles are nearly expanded. In the gardens, the peach and nectarine, the almond, the cherry, and apricot trees, come into full bud during this month. The elm tree flowers about this time. The gardeners find plenty of employment in pruning trees, digging and manuring beds, and sowing a great variety of seeds, both for the flower and kitchen garden.

In the latter part of this month, the equinox happens, when day and night are of an equal length all over the globe; or rather, when the sun is an equal time above and below the horizon: for the morning and evening twilight make apparent day considerably longer than

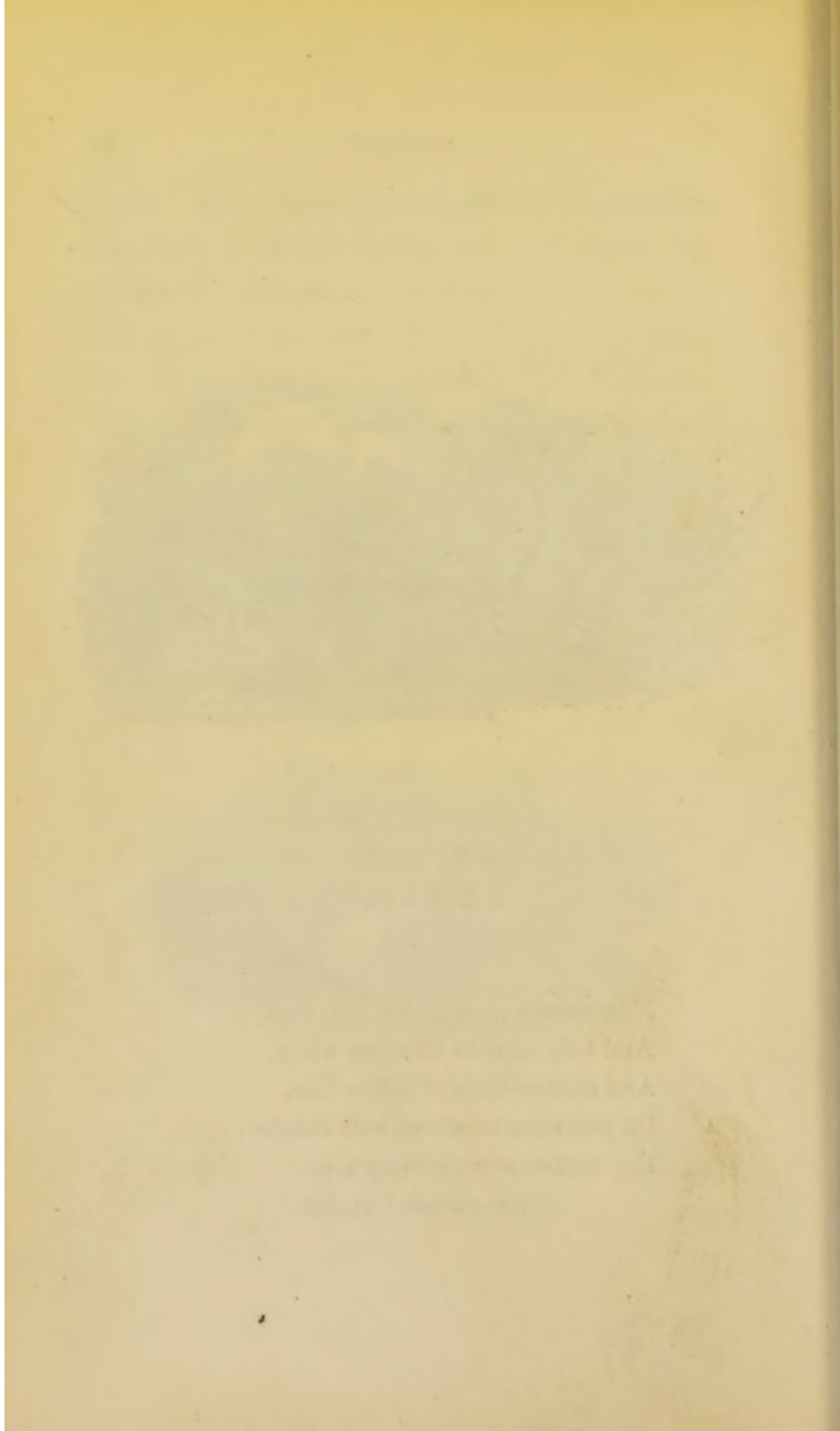
night. This takes place again in September. The first is called the *vernal*, the latter, the *autumnal*, equinox. At these times, storms and tempests are particularly frequent, whence they have always been the terror of mariners. March winds are boisterous and vehement, to a proverb.





APRIL.

Now daisies pied, and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight ;
The cuckoo now on every tree
Sings cuckoo ! cuckoo !



APRIL.

THE name of this month is usually supposed to be derived from the Latin word *aperio*, to open: our Anglo-Saxon ancestors called it *Oster-Monat*, and *Easter-Moneth*, and are said to have held a feast in celebration of the goddess *Eastre*.

April weather is become a proverbial expression for a mixture of the bright and gloomy. The pleasantness of the sunshiny days, with the delightful view of fresh greens and newly opened flowers, is unequalled; but they are frequently overcast with clouds, and chilled by rough wintry blasts.

Her face was like an April morn,
Clad in a wintry cloud ;

says the beautiful ballad of "Margaret's Ghost."

This month gives the most perfect image of spring; for its vicissitudes, of warm gleams of sunshine and gentle showers, have the most powerful effects in hastening the universal *springing* of the vegetable tribes; whence the season derives its appellation.

April generally begins with raw, unpleasant weather, the influence of the equinoctial storms still in some degree prevailing. Its opening is thus described in a poem by Mr. Warton :

Mindful of disaster past,
And shrinking from the northern blast,
The sleety storm returning still,
The morning hoar, the evening chill,
Reluctant comes the timid Spring ;
Scarce a bee, with airy ring,
Murmurs the blossomed boughs around
That clothe the garden's southern bound ;
Scarce a sickly straggling flower
Decks the rough castle's rifted tower ;
Scarce the hardy primrose peeps
From the dark dell's entangled steeps.

* * * * *

Fringing the forest's devious edge,
Half-robed appears the hawthorn hedge,
Or to the distant eye displays,
Weakly green, its budding sprays.

Early in the month, that welcome guest
and harbinger of summer, the swallow, returns.
The kind first seen, is the chimney or house-
swallow, known by its long forked tail and
red breast. At first, here and there only one
appears, glancing quick by us, as if scarcely
able to endure the cold.

The swallow, for a moment seen,
Skims in haste the village green.

But in a few days, their number is much
increased, and they sport with seeming plea-
sure in the warm sunshine.

And see, my Delia, see o'er yonder stream,
Where on the sunny bank the lambkins play;
Alike attracted to the enlivening gleam,
The stranger swallows take their wonted way.

JAGO.

As these birds live on insects, their appear-
ance is a certain proof that some of this minute
tribe of animals are now got abroad from their

winter retreats. "The migration of birds," says the excellent Mr. Ray, "from a hotter to a colder country, or a colder to a hotter, according to the season of the year, as their nature is, I know not how to give an account of, it is so strange and admirable. What moves them to shift their quarters?—you will say, the disagreeableness of the temper of the air to the constitution of their bodies, or want of food. But how come they to be directed to the same place yearly, though sometimes but a little island, as the soland geese to the Basse of Edinburgh-Frith, which they could not possibly see, and so it could have no influence upon them that way? The cold or the heat might possibly drive them in a right line from either; but that they should impel land birds to venture over a wide ocean, of which they can see no end, is strange and unaccountable! one would think that the sight of so much water, and present fear of drowning, should overcome the sense of hunger, or disagreeableness of the temper of the air. Besides, how come they to steer their

course aright to their several quarters, which, before the compass was invented, was hard for a man himself to do, they being not able, as I noted before, to see them at that distance? Think we that the quails, for instance, could see quite across the Mediterranean sea? and yet it is clear they fly out of Italy into Afric, lighting many times on ships in the midst of the sea, to rest themselves when tired and spent with flying? That they should thus shift places, is very convenient for them, and accordingly we see they do it; which seems to be impossible they should, unless themselves were endued with reason, or directed and acted upon by a superior intelligent Cause."

Amusive birds! say where your hid retreat,
When the frost rages, and the tempests beat?
Whence your return, by such nice instinct led,
When Spring, soft season, lifts her blooming head?
Such baffled searches mock man's prying pride—
The God of Nature is your secret guide!

The garden white and copper butterflies
make their appearance this month, as well as
the emperor-moth.

The birds are now busied in pairing, and building their nests. As their singing is the voice of courtship and conjugal love, these concerts begin to fill all the groves with their various melody. The nightingale, that most accomplished and enchanting of songsters, is heard soon after the arrival of the swallow. He sings by day as well as by night; but in the day-time his voice is drowned in the multitude of performers; in the evening it is heard alone; whence the poets have always made the song of the nightingale a nocturnal serenade.

Sweet bird, that shunnest the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chantress, oft, the woods among,
I woo, to hear thy even-song.

MILTON.

Another of the most striking events of this month is, the renewal of the cuckoo's note, which is generally heard about the middle of April. This is so remarkable a circumstance, that it has commanded attention in all countries; and several rustic sayings, and the names

of several plants which flower at this time, are derived from it.

Hail, beauteous stranger of the wood,
Attendant on the Spring !
Now heaven repairs thy rural seat,
And woods thy welcome sing.

Soon as the daisy decks the green,
Thy certain voice we hear ;
Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
Or mark the rolling year ?

Delightful visitant ! with thee
I hail the time of flowers,
When heaven is filled with music sweet
Of birds among the bowers.

The school-boy, wandering in the wood
To pull the flowers so gay,
Starts thy curious voice to hear,
And imitates thy lay.

LOGAN.

“ The fact of the young cuckoo turning out its weaker companions, the natural inmates of the nest, is now undisputed. This operation is, I believe, generally performed on the second day after the birds are hatched,—at

least I have found it to be so in the cases which have come under my observation. The young intruder seems to confine his dislike to his nestling companions to the act of discharging them from the nest. In one instance, which I had an opportunity of observing, the young birds, which had only been hatched two days, were so little hurt by a fall of four feet from the nest to the ground, that two of them contrived to crawl a distance of eight or nine feet from the place on which they had fallen. Sometimes the young cuckoo is hatched before the other birds: in which case he proceeds to discard the eggs, which he is enabled to do by means of a depression in the middle of his back."*

The cuckoo's arrival is regularly preceded some days by that of the wryneck; a small bird, singular in its attitudes and plumage, and living upon the insects that harbour in the bark of trees, which it extracts by means of its long tongue, covered with a thick and glutinous mucus. The wryneck has also a

* Jessy. Gleanings of Natural History.

peculiar note, or cry, easily distinguished by those who have once heard it.

Other birds which are seen amongst us only in the warmer months, as the redstart, white-throat, yellow-wagtail, and black-cap, appear in April.

The fishes are now inspired by the same enlivening influence which acts upon the rest of animated nature; and in consequence, again offer themselves as a prey to the art of the angler, who returns to his usual haunt.

Beneath a willow long forsook,
The fisher seeks his 'customed nook;
And, bursting through the crackling sedge
That crowns the current's caverned edge,
He startles from the bordering wood
The bashful wild-duck's early brood.

WARTON.

“Water, quiet, still water, affords a place of action to a very amusing little fellow (*gyrinus natator*), which, about the month of April, if the weather be tolerably mild, we see gamboling upon the surface of the sheltered pool; and every school-boy, who has angled for a

minnow in the brook, is well acquainted with this merry swimmer in his shining black jacket. Retiring in the autumn, and reposing all the winter in the mud at the bottom of the pond, it awakens in the spring, rises to the surface, and commences its summer sports. They associate in small parties of ten or a dozen, near the bank, where some little projection forms a bay or renders the water particularly tranquil; and here they will circle round each other without contention, each in his sphere, and with no apparent object, from morning until night, with great sprightliness and animation; and so lightly do they move on the fluid, as to form only some faint and transient circles on its surface: very fond of society, we seldom see them alone, or, if parted by accident, they soon regain their busy companions. One pool affords space for the amusement of several parties; yet they do not unite, or contend, but perform their cheerful circlings in separate family association. If we interfere with their merriment they seem greatly alarmed, disperse or dive to the bottom, where their

fears shortly subside, as we soon see again our little merry friends gamboling as before.”*

A considerable number of plants flower in this month; in particular, many of the fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, the flowers of which are peculiarly termed blossoms. These form a most agreeable spectacle, as well on account of their beauty, as of the promise they give of future benefits.

Hope waits upon the flowery prime.

It is, however, an anxious time for the possessor, as the fairest prospect of a plentiful increase is so often blighted. SHAKESPEARE draws a pathetic comparison from this circumstance, to paint the delusive nature of human expectations :—

This is the state of man : To-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope ; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him ;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost !

And MILTON beautifully uses the same simile:

Abortive as the first-born bloom of Spring,
Nipped with the lagging rear of Winter's frost.

* Journal of a Naturalist.

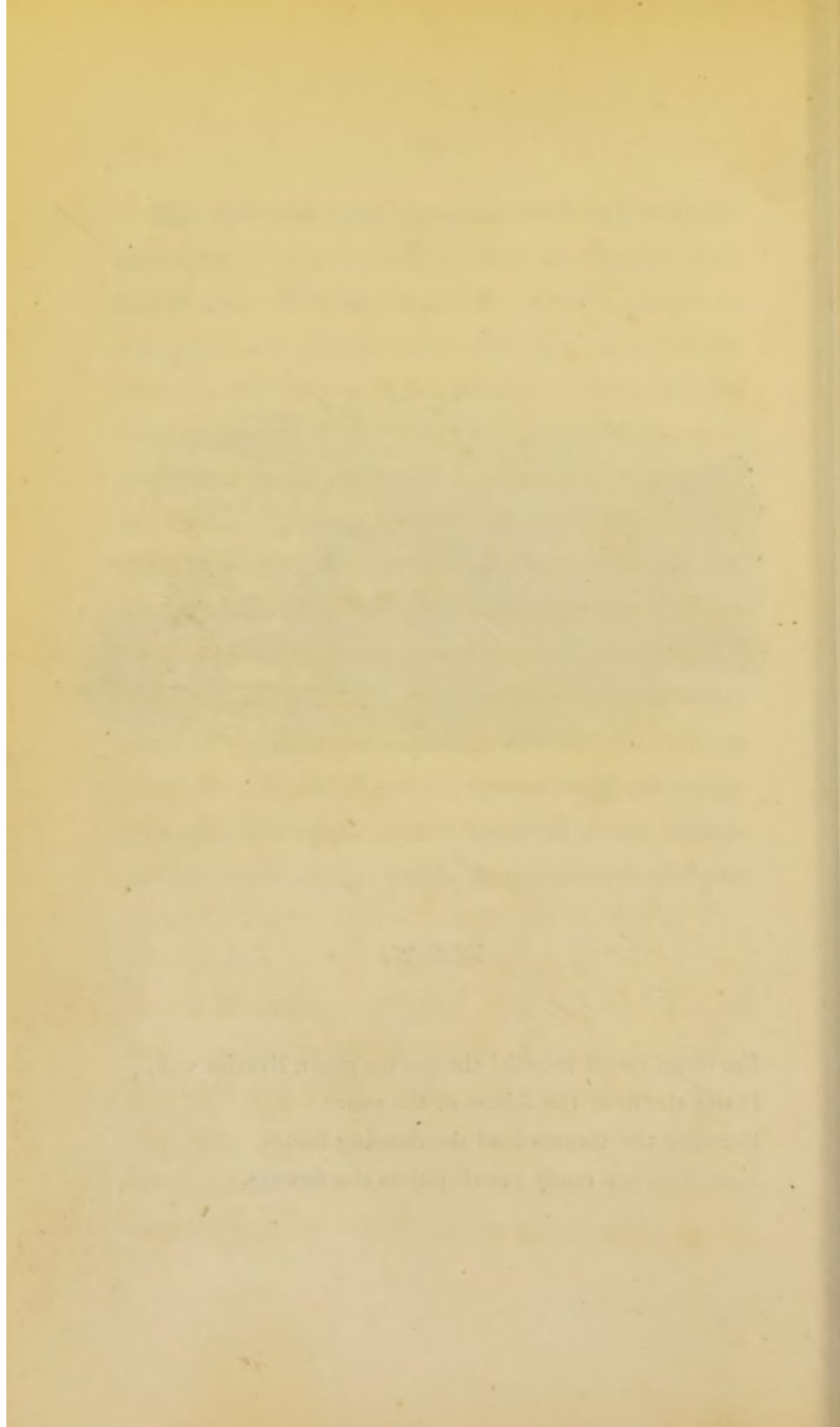
The apricots and peaches lead the way in blossoming, and are followed by the cherry and plum. The black-thorn or sloe, which is a species of plum, also enlivens the hedges with its flowers in this month. Those of the lowlier plants which now most strike the eye, are, the primrose and wood-sorel, under hedges; the wood-anemone, in dry woods and thickets; the wood-crowfoot and marsh-marigold, in wet marshy places; and the lady-smock, or cuckoo-flower as some call it, in meadows.

The farmer is still busied in sowing different sorts of grain, and seeds for fodder; for which purpose dry weather is very suitable; though plentiful showers, at due intervals, are desirable for nourishing young grass and springing corn.



MAY.

For thee, sweet month! the groves green liveries wear ;
If not the first, the fairest of the year :
For thee the Graces lead the dancing hours,
And Nature's ready pencil paints the flowers.



MAY.

ON the first day of this month, the Romans held a feast in honour of *Maia*, the mother of Mercury; and by some it is supposed that this was the origin of the name of May. By the Saxons, it was called *Tri-milki*; the pasturage in this month being so abundant as to enable them to milk their cows *tri*, or three times in the day.

May has ever been the favourite month of the year in poetical description; but the praises, so lavishly bestowed upon it, took their rise from climates more southern than ours. In such, it really unites all the soft beauties of spring with the radiance of summer, and has warmth enough to cheer and invigorate, without overpowering. With us, espe-

cially since we have reckoned by the new style, great part of the month is yet too chill for a perfect enjoyment of the charms of nature; and frequent injury is done to the flowers and young fruits during its course, by blights and blasting winds. May-day, though still observed as a rural festival, has often little pleasure to bestow but that arising from the name. In a very elegant poem, intituled "The Tears of Old May-day," this newer rival is thus described :

Nor wonder, man, that nature's bashful face
And opening charms her rude embraces fear ;
Is she not sprung of April's wayward race,
The sickly daughter of the unripened year ?

With showers and sunshine in her fickle eyes ;
With hollow smiles, proclaiming treacherous peace ;
With blushes harbouring in their thin disguise
The blast that riots on the spring's increase.

The month, however, on the whole, is even in this country sufficiently profuse of beauties. The earth is covered with the freshest green of the grass and young corn, and adorned with numerous flowers opening on every side. The

trees put on all their verdure; the laburnum horse-chestnut, and the alder, blossom in this month. The hedges are rich in fragrance from the snowy flowers of the hawthorn; and the orchards display their highest beauty in the delicate blush of the apple blossoms.

From the moist meadow to the withered hill,
Led by the breeze, the vivid verdure runs,
And swells, and deepens, to the cherished eye.
The hawthorn whitens; and the juicy groves
Put forth their buds, unfolding by degrees.
Till the whole leafy forest stands displayed
In full luxuriance
And the birds sing, concealed.

THOMSON.

All this scene of beauty and fertility is however sometimes dreadfully ravaged by the blights which peculiarly occur in this month. The mischief seems to be done chiefly by innumerable swarms of very small insects, which are brought by the north-east winds.

If brushed from Russian wilds, a cutting gale
Rise not and scatter from his humid wings
The clammy mildew; or, dry blowing, breathe
Untimely frost; before whose baleful blast
The full-blown spring through all her foliage shrinks,

Joyless and dead, a wide dejected waste.
For oft engendered by the hazy north,
Myriads on myriads, insect armies warp
Keen in the poisoned breeze ; and wasteful eat,
Through buds and bark, into the blackened core
Their eager way.

THOMSON.

A cold and windy May is, however, accounted favourable to the corn ; which, if brought forward by early warm weather, is apt to run into stalk, while its ears remain thin and light.

The first of May is the general time for turning out cattle into the pastures, though frequently then very bare of grass. The milk soon becomes more copious, and of finer quality, from the juices in the young grass ; and it is in this month that the making of cheese is usually begun in the dairies.

The gardens now yield an agreeable, though immature product, in the young gooseberries and currants, which are highly acceptable to our tables, now almost exhausted of their store of preserved fruits.

The leafing of trees is commonly completed in this month. It begins with the aquatic

kinds, such as the willow, poplar, and alder ; and ends with the oak, beech, and ash. These are sometimes very thin of foliage even at the close of May.

Among the numerous wild flowers, none attracts more notice than the cowslip ;

Whose bashful flowers,
Declining, hide their beauty from the sun,
Nor give their spotted bosoms to the gaze
Of hasty passenger.

On hedge-banks, the wild germander, of a fine azure blue, is conspicuous ; and the whole surface of the meadows is often covered with the yellow-crowfoot. These flowers are also called butter-cups, and are supposed by some to give the butter its rich yellow tinge at this season ; but erroneously, as the cows will not touch them, on account of their biting quality.

“ The love of flowers,” says that intelligent observer of nature, Mr. Knapp, “ seems a naturally implanted passion, without any alloy or debasing object as a motive: the cottage has its pink, its rose, its polyanthus ; the villa its geranium, its dahlia, and its clematis : we

cherish them in youth, we admire them in declining days; but, perhaps, it is the early flowers of spring that always bring with them the greatest degree of pleasure, and our affections seem immediately to expand at the sight of the first opening blossom under the sunny wall or sheltered bank, however humble its race may be."

Birds hatch and rear their young principally during this month. The patience and assiduity of the female during the task of sitting is admirable; as well as the conjugal affection of the male, who sings to his mate, and often supplies her place; and nothing can exceed the paternal tenderness of both, when the young are brought to light. The night-jar makes his appearance this month, with the fly-catchers. The swift, the tardiest of the swallow tribe, arrives in the early part of this month. The turtle-dove also comes at this time. Partridges and pheasants lay; and young rooks first appear on the branches.

Towards the end of May, the bee-hives send forth their earlier swarms. These colonies con-

sist of the young progeny, now grown too numerous to remain in their parent habitation, and sufficiently strong and vigorous to provide for themselves. One queen-bee is necessary to form each colony; and wherever she flies, they follow. Nature directs them to march in a body in quest of a new settlement, which, if left to their choice, would generally be some hollow trunk of a tree; but man, who converts the labours and instincts of so many animals to his own use, provides them with a more secure dwelling, and repays himself with their honey. The early swarms are generally the most valuable, as they have time enough to lay in a plentiful store of honey for their subsistence against the winter. The glow-worm shines for the first time this month; the cock-chaffer buzzes about; and those beautiful butterflies, the admiral and orange-tipped, are seen. The May-fly comes on the water, to the delight of the angler; and reminds him that at this season trout are in the highest perfection.

This month is not a very busy season for the farmer. Some sowing remains to be done in

late years; and in *early* ones, the weeds, which spring up abundantly both in fields and gardens, require to be kept under. The husbandman now looks forward with anxious hope to the reward of his industry.

Be gracious, Heaven, for now laborious man
Has done his part. Ye fostering breezes, blow!
Ye softening dews, ye tender showers, descend!
And temper all, thou world-reviving sun,
Into the perfect year.

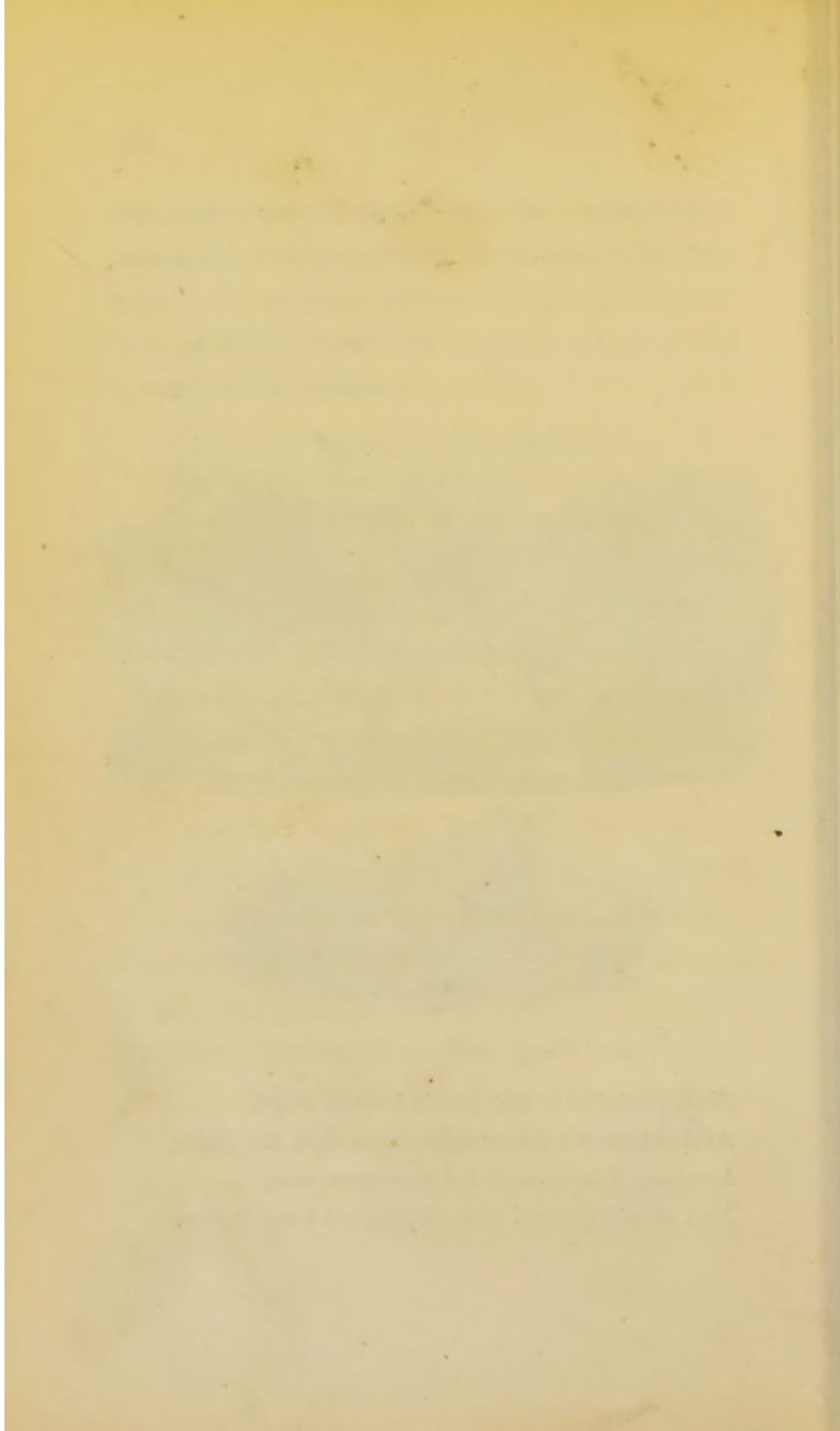
THOMSON.





JUNE.

Now genial suns and gentle breezes reign,
And Summer's fairest splendours deck the plain;
Exulting Flora views her new-born rose,
And all the ground with short-lived beauty glows.



JUNE.

THE goddess Juno is said to claim the honour of giving name to this month ; others assert it to be derived from Junius Brutus. By the Saxons, it was termed *Sere-monath*, or Dry Month.

June is really, in this climate, what the poets represent May to be — the most lovely month of the year. Summer is commenced, and warm weather thoroughly established ; yet the heats rarely rise to excess, or interrupt the enjoyment of those pleasures which the scenes of nature now afford. The trees are in their fullest dress ; and a profusion of the gayest

flowers is every where scattered around, which put on all their beauty just before they are cut down by the scythe, or withered by the heat.

Soft, copious showers are extremely welcome about the beginning of this month, to forward the growth of the herbage. Such an one is thus described by THOMSON :

Gradual sinks the breeze
Into a perfect calm ; that not a breath
Is heard to quiver through the closing woods,
Or rustling turn the many-twinkling leaves
Of aspen tall.

At last,
The clouds consign their treasures to the fields ;
And, softly shaking on the dimpled pool
Prelusive drops, let all their moisture flow,
In large effusion, o'er the freshened world.
The stealing shower is scarce to patter heard
By such as wander through the forest-walks,
Beneath the umbrageous multitude of leaves.
But who can hold the shade, while Heaven descends
In universal bounty, shedding herbs,
And fruits, and flowers, on Nature's ample lap ?

One of the earliest rural employments of this month is the shearing of sheep ; a business of much importance in many parts of the king-

dom, where wool is one of the most valuable products. England has for ages been famous for its breeds of sheep, which yield wool of various qualities, suited to different branches of the woollen manufactory. The downs of Dorsetshire, and other southern and western counties, feed sheep, whose fine short fleeces are employed in making the best broad cloths. The coarser wool of Yorkshire, and the northern counties, is used in the narrow cloths. The large Leicestershire and Lincolnshire sheep are clothed with long thick flakes, proper for the hosier's use; and every other kind is valuable for some particular purpose.

The season for sheep-shearing commences as soon as the warm weather is so far settled that the sheep may without danger lay aside great part of their clothing. The following tokens are given by DYER, in his "Fleece," to mark out the time:

If verdant alder spreads
Her silver flowers; if humble daises yield
To yellow crowfoot and luxuriant grass,
Gay shearing time approaches.

Before shearing, the sheep undergo the operation of washing, in order to free the wool from the foulness it has contracted.

Upon the brim
Of a clear river gently drive the flock,
And plunge them one by one into the flood ;
Plunged in the flood, not long the struggler sinks,
With his white flakes, that glisten through the tide ;
The sturdy rustic, in the middle wave,
Awaits to see him rising ; one arm bears
His lifted head above the limpid stream,
While the full clammy fleece the other laves
Around, laborious, with repeated toil ;
And then resigns him to the sunny bank,
Where, bleating loud, he shakes his dripping locks.

DYER.

The shearing itself is conducted with a degree of ceremony and rural dignity, and is a kind of festival, as well as a piece of labour.

At last of snowy white, the gathered flocks
Are in the wattled pen innumerable pressed,
Head above head ; and, ranged in lusty rows,
The shepherds sit, and whet the sounding shears.
The housewife waits to roll her fleecy stores,
With all her gay-drest maids attending round.
One, chief, in gracious dignity enthroned,
Shines o'er the rest, the pastoral queen, and rays
Her smiles, sweet-beaming, on her shepherd-king.

A simple scene ! yet hence Britannia sees
Her solid grandeur rise ; hence she commands
The exalted stores of every brighter clime,
The treasures of the sun without his rage.

THOMSON.

A profusion of fragrance now arises from the fields of clover in flower. Of this plant, there are the varieties of white and purple. The latter is sometimes called honeysuckle, from the quantity of sweet juice contained in the tube of the flower, whence the bees extract much of their honey.

A still more delicious odour proceeds from the beans in blossom ; of which THOMSON speaks in this rapturous language :

Long let us walk
Where the breeze blows from yon extended field
Of blossomed beans. Arabia cannot boast
A fuller gale of joy, than, liberal, thence
Breathes through the sense, and takes the ravished soul.

This too may be called, the fragrant month. In the garden, roses, honeysuckles, syringa, Spanish broom, &c. fill the air with the most exquisite perfume, particularly in the evening.

Beans and peas belong to a large natural

family of plants, called the *papilionaceous*, or butterfly-shaped blossomed, and the *leguminous*, from the pods they bear. Almost all these, in our climate, afford wholesome food for man or beast. Of some, the seeds alone are used, as of pea and bean; of some again, the entire pod, as of French and kidney-bean; and of others, the whole plant, as of clover, lucern, and vetch.

In the hedges, the place of the hawthorn is supplied by the flowers of the hip, or dog-rose, the different hues of which, from a light bluish to a deep crimson, form a most elegant variety of colour. Some time after, the woodbine or honey-suckle begins to blow; and this, united with the rose, gives our hedges their highest beauty and fragrance.

In this month, the observer of the elegancies of nature cannot but particularly admire the white briony; it has tendrils and leaves something like those of the vine, and mantles the hedges with the most graceful festoons.

The several kinds of corn come into ear and flower during this month; as do likewise

numerous species of grass, which, indeed, are all so many lesser kinds of corn; or rather, corn is only a larger sort of grass. It is peculiar to all this tribe of plants to have long slender leaves, a jointed stalk, and a flowering head: either in the form of a close spike, like wheat, or a loose bunch, like oats. This head consists of numerous husky flowers, each of which bears a single seed.

In the larger kinds, which are usually termed corn, these seeds are big enough to be worth separating; and they form the chief article of food of almost all the civilized nations of the world. In Europe, the principal kinds of corn are wheat, rye, barley, and oats. In Asia, rice is most cultivated. In Africa, and the West Indies, maize or Indian corn.

The smaller kinds, called grass, are most valuable for their leaves and stalks, or herbage, which make the principal food of all domestic cattle. This, cut down and dried, is hay, the winter-provision of cattle in all the temperate and northern climates. Grass is most fit to cut, after it is in the ear, but before its seeds

are ripened. If it be suffered to grow too long, it will lose all its nutritious juices, and become like the straw of corn. The latter part of June is the beginning of hay-harvest for the southern and middle parts of the kingdom. This is one of the busiest and most agreeable of rural occupations. Both sexes and all ages are engaged in it. The fragrance of the new-mown hay, the gaiety of all surrounding objects, and the genial warmth of the weather, all conspire to render it a season of pleasure and delight to the beholder. It is at this season that we can peculiarly feel the beauty of these charming lines of MILTON :

As one who, long in populous city pent,
Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
Forth issuing on a summer's morn, to breathe
Among the pleasant villages and farms
Adjoined, from each thing met conceives delight :
The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,
Or dairy, each rural sight, each rural sound.

On the twenty-first of June happens the summer-solstice, or longest day. At this time, in the most northern parts of the island,

there is scarcely any night, the twilight continuing almost from the setting to the rising of the sun ; so that it is light enough at midnight to see to read. This season is also properly called Midsummer ; though, indeed, the greatest heats are not yet arrived, and there is more warm weather after it than before.

The principal season for taking that delicate fish, the mackerel, is in this month ; of late years, however, many are brought to market in May.

It is in this month that the May-fly appears in its greatest perfection, affording the angler some of his noblest sport.

But should you lure
From his dark haunt, beneath the tangled roots
Of pendent trees, the monarch of the brook,
Behoves you then to ply your finest art.
Long time he, following cautious, scans the fly,
And oft attempts to seize it, but as oft
The dimpled water speaks his jealous fear.

THOMSON.

Currants and gooseberries begin to ripen about the end of June, and prove extremely

refreshing as the parching heats advance. The wholesome and delicious strawberry, the first ripe fruit of the garden, ripens early this month : it is remarkable, that it is a native of almost every part of the world.

Though the other senses are so much gratified in this month, the ear loses most of its entertainment, as the birds, now the season of courtship and rearing their young is past, no longer exercise their musical powers ; except those song-birds that produce a second brood. “ I lay it down,” says White, “ as a maxim in Ornithology, that as long as there is any incubation going on, there is music.”

The groves, the fields, the meadows, now no more
With melody resound. 'T is silence all ;
As if the lovely songsters, overwhelmed
By bounteous nature's plenty, lay intranced
In drowsy lethargy.

After the end of June, an attentive observer heard no birds except the stone-curlew (thick-kneed plover of Pennant) whistling late at night ; the yellow-hammer, goldfinch, and golden-crested wren, now and then chirping.

The cuckoo's note ceases about this time. Various beautiful insects are seen in this month; among others, the ringlet-butterfly, the marble-white, the clouded-yellow, the tiger-moth, and stag-beetle.

“Insects seem to leave their retreats and burst all at once into life. Insignificant as they may appear to us, they are all designed, in the order of nature, to answer some good and useful purpose. Even our very health, in some instances, depends on them, and many of our actual enjoyments. They supply food for our pretty songsters; and enliven the whole creation. They form a variety and interest in the scenes of life; and to those who are curious in examining their habits and economy, they afford an endless source of harmless and instructive amusement.”*

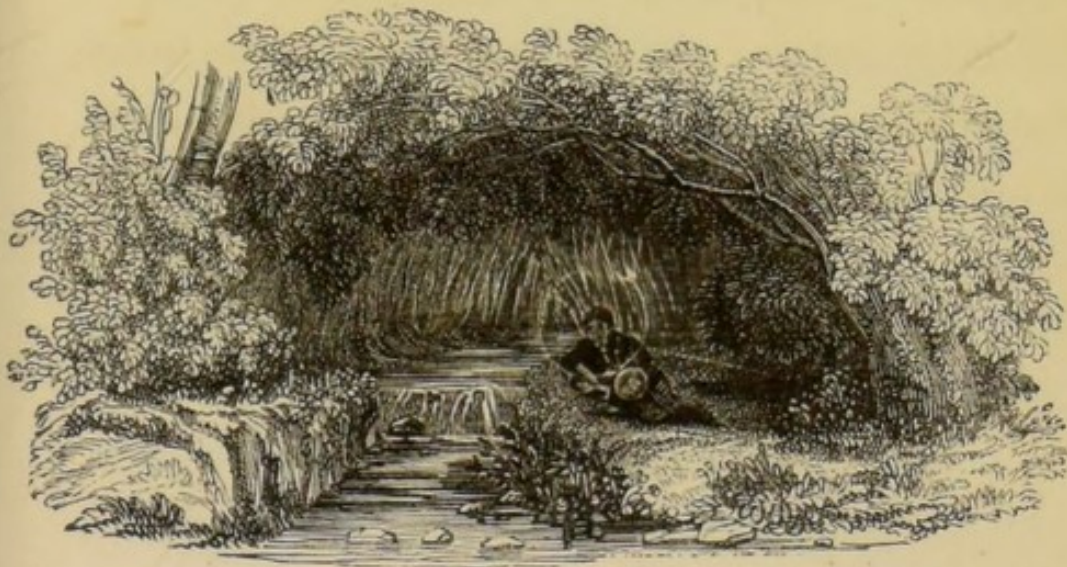
Each crawling insect holds a rank
Important in the plan of Him who framed
This scale of beings.

THOMSON.

* Jesse: Gleanings in Natural History.

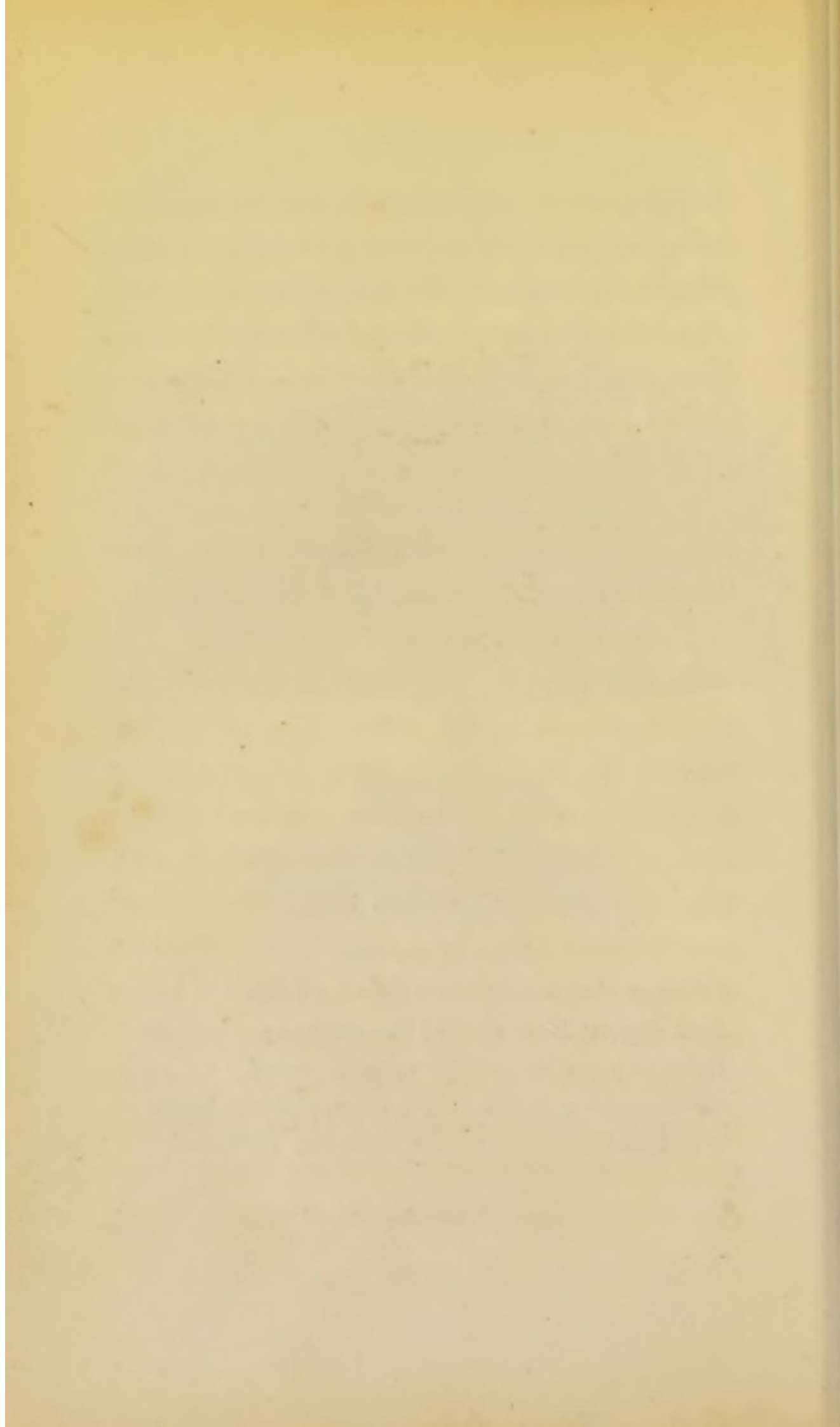
About the end of this month is the greatest hatch of pheasants and partridges : the sober clothing of the females that produce the largest and most valuable broods, is one of the beautiful provisions of nature to protect them from the ravages of their enemies, from whose search this clothing in a great degree preserves them.





JULY.

Deep to the root
Of vegetation parched, the cleaving fields
And slippery lawn an arid hue disclose ;
Echo no more returns the cheerful sound
Of sharpening scythe ; the mower, sinking, heaps
O'er him the humid hay, with flowers perfumed.



JULY.

JULY, so named in compliment to the great Roman commander, was called by the Saxons, *Hey-monat*, or the season of hay-harvest.

As January is the coldest, July is the hottest, month of the year. The direct influence of the sun, indeed, is continually diminishing after the summer-solstice ; but the earth and air have been so thoroughly heated, that the warmth which they retain more than compensates, for a time, the diminution of solar rays. The effects of this weather upon the face of nature soon become manifest. All the flowers of the former month diminish in beauty, shrivel, and fall ; at the same time their leaves and stalks lose their verdure, and the whole plant hastens to decay. Many

plants, however, do not begin to flower till July: these are, particularly, the aromatic, the succulent, or thick-leaved; several of the aquatic, and of those called compound-flowered, in which many florets are collected into one head, as the thistle, sowthistle, hawkweed, &c. The lily is one of the principal ornaments of gardens in this month; and with its delicate white flowers, gives an agreeable sensation of coolness to the eye.

The animal creation seem oppressed with languor during this hot season, and either seek the recesses of woods, or resort to pools and streams, to cool their bodies, and quench their thirst.

On the grassy bank
Some ruminating lie; while others stand
Half in the flood, and, often bending, sip
The circling surface. In the middle droops
The strong laborious ox, of honest front,
Which incomposed he shakes; and from his sides
The troublous insects lashes with his tail,
Returning still.

THOMSON.

The insect tribe, however, are peculiarly active and vigorous in the hottest weather. These minute creatures are for the most part annual, being hatched in the spring, and dying

at the approach of winter: they have therefore no time to lose in indolence, but must make the most of their short existence; especially as their most perfect state continues only during a part of their lives. All insects undergo three changes, in each of which they are transformed to a totally different appearance. From the egg, they first turn into caterpillars or maggots, when they crawl upon many feet, and are extremely voracious; many kinds of them doing much mischief in the gardens, and sometimes devouring the leaves of the trees, and even the herbage on the ground. This is their state in the spring. They next become *aurelias*, or *chrysalides*, when they resemble an infant closely wrapt in swaddling clothes, being motionless, taking no nourishment, and, indeed, having no appearance of living creatures. From this state they burst forth into the perfect insect, shining in all its colours, furnished with wings, full of activity, capable of propagating its species, and feeding, for the most part, on thin liquid aliments, such as the honey of flowers and Juices of animals. Most of them continue thus

but a short time. The male impregnates the female ; she lays her eggs ; and they both die.

This is a favourite season for the entomologist. Large copper and other butterflies are very active during this period—the large tiger and lacky moths are also to be found.

Waked by his warmer ray, the reptile young
Come winged abroad ; by the light air upborne,
Lighter and full of soul. From every chink,
And secret corner, where they slept away
The wintry storms ; or rising from their tombs
To higher life ; by myriads, forth at once,
Swarming they pour ; of all the varied hues
Their beauty-beaming parent can disclose.
Ten thousand forms ! ten thousand different tribes !
People the blaze. To sunny waters some
By fatal instinct fly ; where on the pool
They, sportive, wheel ; or, sailing down the stream,
Are snatched immediate by the quick-eyed trout,
Or daring salmon. Through the green-wood, glad,
Some love to stray ; there lodged, amused, and fed,
In the fresh leaf. Luxurious, others make
The meads their choice, and visit every flower,
And every latent herb : for, the sweet task,
To propagate their kinds, and where to wrap,
In what soft beds, their young yet undisclosed,
Employs their tender care. Some to the house,
The fold, and dairy, hungry, bend their flight ;
Sip round the pail, or taste the curdling cheese.

THOMSON.

About the middle of this month, the shoals of that migratory fish, the pilchard, begin to appear off the coast of Cornwall, where they are caught in immense quantities.

The luxury of cooling shades is now peculiarly grateful; and, indeed, is scarcely desired in this climate longer than a few weeks at the height of summer.

Welcome, ye shades! ye bowery thickets, hail!
Ye lofty pines! ye venerable oaks!
Ye ashes wild, resounding o'er the steep!
Delicious is your shelter to the soul,
As to the hunted hart the sallying spring.

THOMSON.

Bathing, too, is a delightful amusement at this season; and happy is the swimmer who is able to enjoy the full pleasure of this healthful exercise. The power of habit to improve the natural faculties is in nothing more apparent than in the art of swimming. Man, without practice, is utterly unable to support himself in the water. In these northern countries, the season for pleasant bathing being short, few in proportion can swim at

all ; and even to those who have acquired the art, it is a laborious and fatiguing exercise.—Whereas, in the tropical countries, where from their very infancy both sexes are continually plunging into the water, they become a sort of amphibious creatures, swimming and diving with the utmost ease, and for hours together, without intermission.

The excessive heats of this period of the year cause such an evaporation from the surface of the earth and waters, that, after some continuance of dry weather, large heavy clouds are formed, which at length let fall their collected fluid in extremely copious showers, and these frequently beat down the full-grown corn, and sometimes deluge the country with sudden floods. Thunder and lightning generally accompany these summer storms. Lightning is a collection of electric fire drawn from the heated air and earth, and accumulated in the clouds, which, at length overcharged, suddenly let go their contents in the form of broad flashes or fiery darts. These are attracted again by the earth, and often intercepted by buildings, trees, and

other elevated objects, which are shattered by the shock. Thunder is the noise occasioned by the explosion, and therefore always follows the lightning; the sound travelling slower to our ears than the light to our eyes. Just the same thing happens when a gun is fired, at a distance. When we hear the thunder, therefore, all danger from that flash of lightning is over; and thunder, though so awful and tremendous to the ear, is of itself entirely harmless.

The effects of the great heat on the human body are agreeably allayed by the various wholesome fruits which Providence offers at this season for the use of man. Those which are now ripe are of all the most cooling and refreshing; as currants, gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries, and cherries. These are no less salutary and useful, than the richest products of the warmer climates.

Fowls moult, or lose their feathers, during this month. The smaller birds do not moult so early; but all renew their plumage before winter, when they are in their finest and warmest clothing.

Young partridges and pheasants are found at this time among the corn.

The farmer's chief employment in July is getting home the various products of the earth. It is the principal hay-month in the northern parts of the kingdom, and the work-people suffer much fatigue from the excessive heat to which they are exposed.

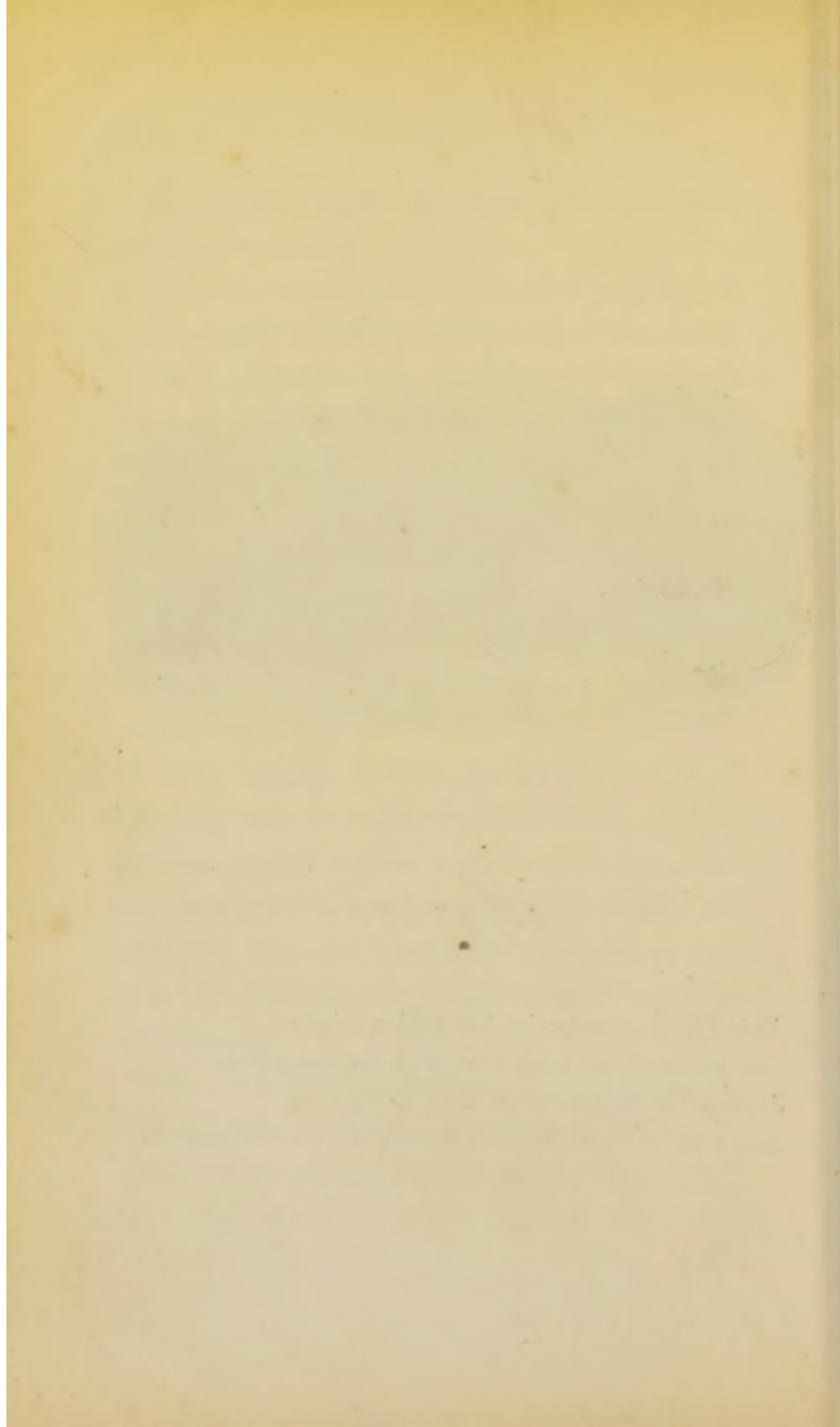
Flax and hemp are pulled in this month. These plants are cultivated in various parts of Europe, more than in England. The stalks of both are full of rough fibres or strings, which, separated and prepared in a particular manner, become fit for spinning into thread. Of flax, linen is made, from the finest cambric to the coarsest canvas. Hemp is chiefly used for coarse cloth, such as strong sheeting, and sacking; but it is sometimes wrought to considerable fineness; it is also twisted into ropes and cables.

The corn-harvest begins in July in the southern parts of the island; but August is the principal harvest-month for the whole kingdom.



AUGUST.

Fair Plenty now begins her golden reign ;
The yellow fields thick-wave with ripened grain ;
Joyous, the swains renew their sultry toils,
And bear in triumph home the harvest's wealthy spoils.



AUGUST.

AUGUST, so called in compliment to the celebrated Roman emperor, Augustus ; and by the Anglo-Saxons, *Arn-monat*, intimating that this was the month for filling the barns with the products of the land. Arn is the Saxon word for harvest.

In the beginning of this month the weather is still hot, and usually calm and fair. What remained to be perfected by the powerful influence of the sun, is daily advancing to maturity. The farmer now sees the principal object of his culture, and the chief source of his riches, waiting only for the hand of the gatherer. Of the several kinds of grain, rye and oats are

usually the first ripened ; but this varies, according to the time of sowing ; and some of every species may be seen fit for cutting at the same time.

Every fair day is now of great importance ; since, when the corn is once ripe, it is liable to continual damage while standing, either from the shedding of the seeds, from the depredations of birds, or from storms. The utmost diligence is therefore used by the careful husbandman to get it in, and labourers are hired from all quarters to hasten and complete the work.

Poured from the villages, a numerous train
Now spreads o'er all the fields. In formed array
The reapers move, nor shrink for heat or toil,
By emulation urged. Others, dispersed,
Or bind in sheaves, or load, or guide, the wain,
That tinkles as it passes. Far behind,
Old age and infancy, with careful hand,
Pick up each straggling ear.

This pleasing harvest-scene is beheld in its perfection only in the open-field countries, where the sight can take in at once an uninterrupted extent of land waving with corn,

and a multitude of people engaged in the various parts of the labour. It is a prospect equally delightful to the eye and the heart, and which ought to inspire every sentiment of benevolence to our fellow-creatures, and gratitude to our Creator.

Be not too narrow, husbandmen ! but fling
From the full sheaf, with charitable stealth,
The liberal handful. Think, oh ! grateful, think
How good the God of harvest is to you ;
Who pours abundance o'er your flowing fields !

THOMSON.

In a late season, or where favourable opportunities of getting in the harvest have been neglected, the corn on the ground often suffers greatly from heavy storms of wind and rain. It is beaten to the earth ; the seeds are shed, or rotted by the moisture ; or, if the weather continues warm, the corn grows, that is, the seeds begin to germinate and put out shoots. Grain in this state is sweet and moist ; it soon spoils on keeping ; and bread made from it, is clammy and unwholesome.

Harvest concludes with the field peas and

beans, which are suffered to become quite dry and hard before they are cut down. The blackness of the bean-pods and stalks is disagreeable to the eye, though the crop is valuable to the farmer. In these countries they are used as food for cattle only, as the nourishment they afford, though strong, is gross and heavy.

The rural festival of harvest-home is an extremely natural one, and has been observed in almost all ages and countries. What can more gladden the heart than to see the long-expected products of the year, which have been the cause of so much care and anxiety, now safely housed, and beyond the reach of injury?

Inwardly smiling, the proud farmer views
The rising pyramids that grace his yard,
And counts his large increase ; his barns are stored,
And groaning staddles bend beneath their load.

SOMERVILLE.

The poor labourer, too, who has toiled in securing another's wealth, justly expects to partake of the happiness. The jovial harvest-

supper cheers his heart, and prepares him to begin without murmuring, the labours of another year. About the middle of this month the catkins of the hazel-nut make their appearance; these contain the male blossoms, and by being formed thus early acquire a firmness that enables them to resist the severity of the ensuing winter.

This month is the season for another kind of harvest in some parts of England, which is, the hop-picking. The hop is a climbing plant, sometimes growing wild in hedges, and cultivated on account of its use in making malt-liquors. They are planted in regular rows, and poles set for them to run upon. When the poles are covered to the top, nothing can make a more elegant appearance than one of these hop-gardens. At the time of gathering, the poles are taken up with the plants clinging to them, and the scaly flowering heads, which is the part used, are carefully picked off. These possess a finely flavoured bitter, which they readily impart to hot water. They improve the taste of beer, and make it keep

better. Kent, Sussex, and Worcester, are the counties most famous for the growth of hops.

The number of plants in flower is now very sensibly diminished. Those of the former months are running fast to seed; and few new ones succeed. The uncultivated heaths and commons are now, however, in their chief beauty, from the flowers of the different kinds of heath or ling with which they are covered, so as to spread a rich purple hue over the whole ground: meadow-saffron, and Canterbury-bells are in flower. Many of the fern tribe now shew the rusty-coloured dots on the back of the leaves, which are their parts of fructification: the leaves of the beech tree now assume a yellow tinge.

Some of the choicest wall-fruits are now coming into season.

The sunny wall
Presents the downy peach, the shining plum,
The ruddy fragrant nectarine, and, dark
Beneath his ample leaf, the luscious fig.

About the middle of August, the largest of the swallow tribe, the swift or long-wing, disappears.

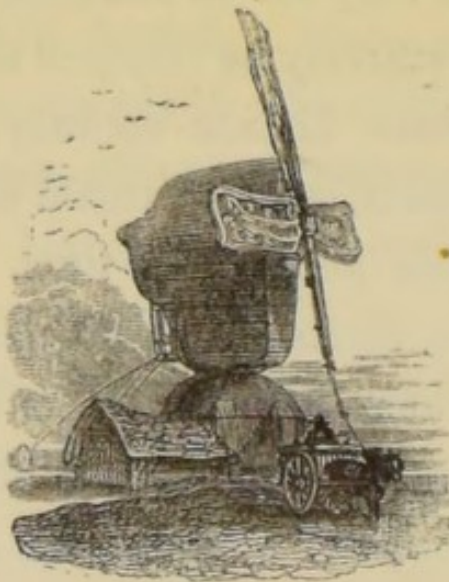
On their neighbouring beach yon swallows stand,
And wait for favouring winds to leave the land.

As there can yet be no want of insect food—moths abound in profusion at this time; the alderman and painted lady-butterflies are constantly on the wing, and the weather is still warm—they cannot be supposed to retire to holes or caverns, and become torpid for the winter, and as they are so admirably formed for flight, it can scarcely be doubted that they now migrate to some distant country. The wry-neck also departs, and the turtle dove. Starlings congregate about this time. Nearly at the same time, rooks no longer pass the nights from home, but roost in their nest-trees.

The red-breast, one of our finest though commonest songsters, renews his music about the end of the month. The young ones, that are now full-grown, give us a presage of their future familiarity with us, by hopping near us,

and as it were observing us, among the shrubs in the garden. No bird shews so little fear of man as this, even when not pressed by hunger, and its confidence is rarely abused.

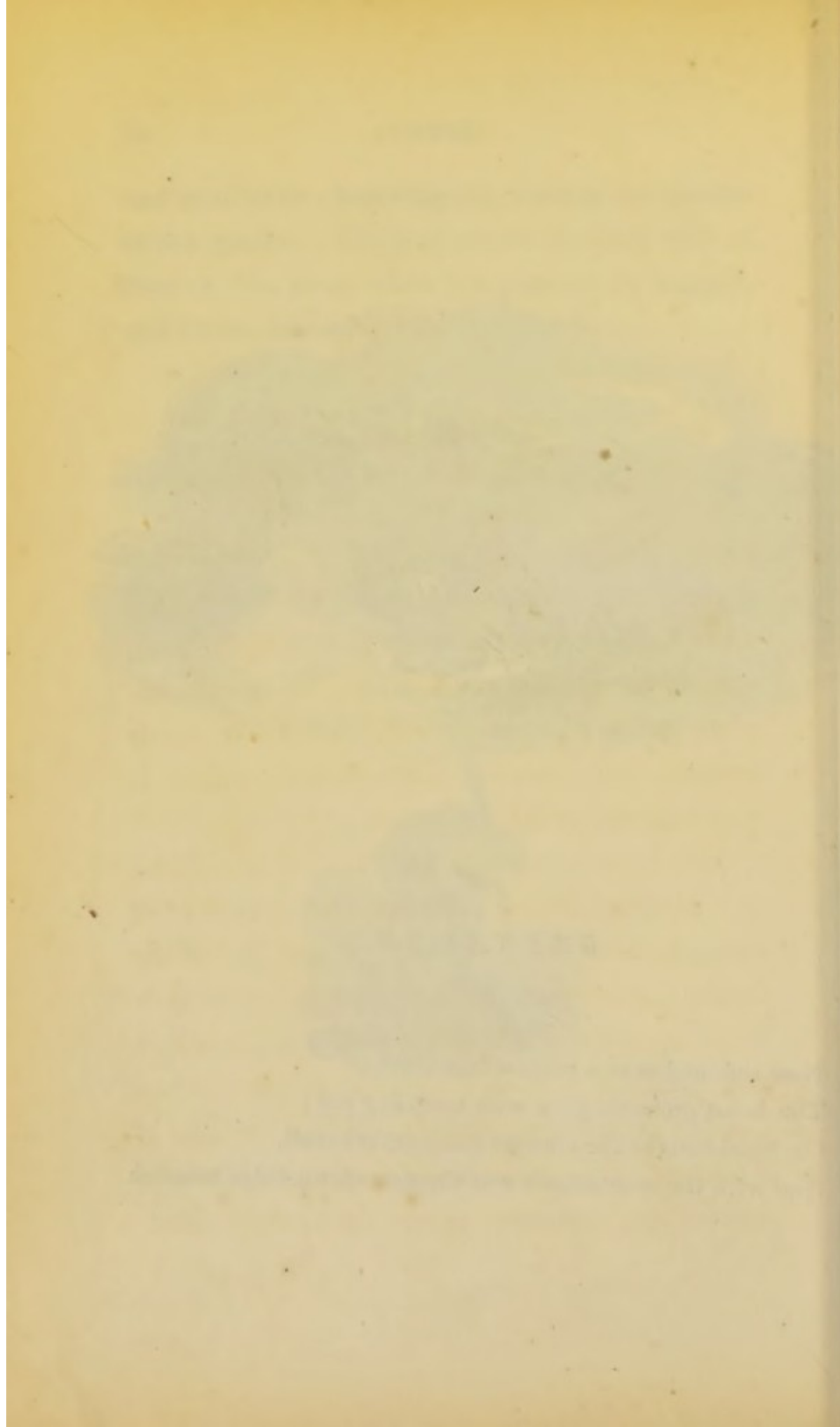
The bird whom man loves best,
The pious bird with the scarlet breast,
Our little English robin !
The bird that comes about our doors
When autumn winds are sobbing.





SEPTEMBER.

Now softened suns a mellow lustre shed,
The laden orchards glow with tempting red ;
On hazel-boughs the clusters hang embrowned,
And with the sportsman's war the new-shorn fields resound.



SEPTEMBER.

THIS, though now the ninth month of the year, was formerly the seventh; as its name imports, being derived from the two Latin words *Septem* and *Imber*. The Saxons called it *Gerst-monat*, or barley-month.

This is, in general, a very agreeable month; the distinguishing softness and serenity of autumn, with its deep blue skies, prevailing through great part of it. The days are now very sensibly shortened; and the mornings and evenings are chill and damp, though the warmth is still considerable in the middle of the day. This variation of temperature is one cause why autumn is an unhealthy time,

especially in the warmer climates and in moist situations. Those, who are obliged to be abroad early or late in this season, should be guarded by warm clothing against the cold fogs.

In late years, a good deal of corn is abroad, especially in the northern parts of the island, at the beginning of September; but it is supposed that, in general, all will be got in, or at least cut, by this time; for the first of the month is the day on which it is allowed by law to begin shooting partridges. These birds make their nests in corn-fields, where they bring up their young, which run after the parents like chickens. While the corn is standing, they have a safe refuge in it; but after harvest, when the sportsman may freely range over the stubble with his pointers, they are either obliged to take to the wing, and offer themselves to the shooter's aim, or are surrounded by nets on the ground, and thus taken in whole coveys:

In his mid-career, the spaniel struck,
Stiff, by the tainted gale, with open nose,
Outstretched, and finely sensible, draws full,

Fearful and cautious, on the latent prey ;
As in the sun the circling covey bask
Their varied plumes, and watchful every way,
Through the rough stubble turn the secret eye.

THOMSON.

Although gathering hops sometimes takes place in August, this is the month which is most favourable to it. But so uncertain is the crop, and so doubtful the return to the agriculturist, from the great influence of the season on this tender plant, as to have given rise to the following lines :—

Till St. James's * day be come and gone,
You can't tell whether you have hops or none.

Hop-picking, however, is a source both of mirth and money to the labourers, in those districts where hops are grown. The cottages are deserted during the day : the good housewife and her numerous family are transferred to the hop ground, where all assist in the easy task of plucking the hops from the bines to help fill the bushel. Even the infant and its rustic cradle are carried to the field; and such is the degree of drowsiness produced by the powerful but harmless odour of the hops, that

* 25th July.

these little innocent beings sleep nearly the whole day, amid the hum and bustle of the scene, without requiring either trouble or care.

The labours of the husbandman have but a very short intermission; for no sooner is the harvest gathered in, but the fields are again ploughed up and prepared for the winter corn, rye, and wheat, which are sown during this month and the next.

At this time it is proper to diminish the entrance of bee-hives, that wasps and drones may have less opportunity of getting in, and devouring the honey.

Early in September the herrings approach different parts of our north-east coast, affording the same harvest to those resident in that quarter, as the pilchards do to the inhabitants of Cornwall. Yarmouth is the principal station in England whence the fishermen proceed in search of this valuable booty.

Towards the end of this month, the chimney or common swallow entirely disappears. There are various opinions concerning the manner in which these birds dispose of themselves during the winter; some imagining that they

all fly away to distant southern regions, where insect food is at all times to be met with; others, that they retire to holes and caverns, or even sink to the bottom of ponds and rivers, where they pass the winter months in a torpid, and apparently lifeless state. That many of them migrate to other countries, seems sufficiently proved. The swift, the swallow, and one of our martins, have been seen at Sierra Leone and the island of St. Thomas, in the months of January and February: they have been traced in their course across Spain and Portugal; but some, probably, always stay behind, which are the younger broods, or smaller kinds, that are incapable of so long a flight, and perish. For some time before their departure, they begin to collect in flocks, settling on trees, basking on the roofs of buildings, or gathering round towers and steeples, whence they take short excursions, as if to try their powers of flight.

When Autumn scatters his departing gleams,
Warned of approaching winter, gathered, play
The swallow people; and tossed wide around

O'er the calm sky, in convulsion swift,
The feathered eddy floats : rejoicing once,
Ere to their wintry slumbers they retire ;
In clusters clung, beneath the mouldering bank,
And where, unpierced by frost, the cavern sweats.
Or rather into warmer climes conveyed,
With other kindred birds of season, there
They twitter cheerful, till the vernal months
Invite them welcome back : for, thronging, now
Innumerable wings are in commotion all.

THOMSON.

Not only the swallow tribe, but many other small birds which feed on insects, disappear on the approach of cold weather, when the insects themselves are no longer to be met with.

On the other hand, some birds arrive at this season from still more northerly countries to pass the winter with us. The fieldfare and red-wing, whose departure was mentioned in March, return about the end of September. They feed chiefly on the berries with which our woods and hedges are plentifully stored all the winter.

Those sweet and mellow-toned songsters, the wood-lark, thrush, and blackbird, now begin their autumnal music ; but it is not the full joyous note of spring : frequently the song

proceeds from the young birds of the year imitating the parental note, and influenced by the state of the temperature.

Two or three species of lady-birds are found at this time, and this is the principal season for the death's-head moth; "this creature," says Mr. Knapp, "was formerly considered as one of our rarest insects, and doubtful if truly indigenous; but for the last twenty years, from the profuse cultivation of the potato, is become not very uncommon in divers places. The markings on its back represent to fertile imaginations, the head of a perfect skeleton, with the limb-bones crossed beneath."

The most useful fruit this country affords, the apple, successively ripens, according to its different kinds, from July to September or October; but the principal harvest of them is about the close of this month. They are now gathered for our English vintage, the cyder-making, which in some countries is a busy and important employment.

Autumn paints

Ausonian hills with grapes, while English plains
Blush with pomaceous harvests, breathing sweets.

Oh! let me now, when the kind early dew
Unlocks the embosomed odours, walk among
The well-ranged file of trees, whose full-aged stores
Diffuse ambrosial streams.

* * * * *

Now, now 's the time ; ere hasty suns forbid
To work, disburden thou thy sapless wood
Of its rich progeny ; the turgid fruit
Abounds with mellow liquor.

PHILIPS.

The apples are taken, either fresh from the tree, or after they have lain awhile to mellow, and crushed in a mill and then pressed, till all their juice is extracted. This is set to ferment, whence it becomes cyder, which may properly be called apple-wine. Pears treated in the same manner yield a vinous liquor, called perry. These are the common drink in the countries where they are chiefly made.

Another agreeable product, both of our thickets and gardens, the hazel-nut, is fit for gathering at this time.

Ye virgins, come. For you their latest song
The woodlands raise ; the clustering nuts for you
The lover finds amid the secret shade ;
And, where they burnish on the topmost bough,
With active vigour crushes down the tree,
Or shakes them ripe from the resigning husk.

The acorns now begin to fall from the oak, and the nuts from the beech; both which have the name of mast. These, in countries where there are large forests, afford a plentiful food to swine, which are turned into the woods at this season.

The hedges in many places abound with the wild clematis: it has probably obtained its usual appellation of "traveller's joy," from its being generally found in great profusion near villages and country towns.

"The runners or branches, are very strong and flexible, and are much used by our peasantry as a binding for hedge fagots.—The tubes, lymph-ducts, and air vessels of this plant appear in a common magnifier beautifully arranged, being large, and admitting the air freely to circulate through them. Our village boys avail themselves of this circumstance, cut off a long joint from a dry branch, light it, and running about, use it as their seniors do the tobacco-pipe. They call it smoke-wood; and the action of the breath constantly agitating the fire, it will

long continue kindled. The pores are well seen by drawing some bright coloured liquor into them. I have often observed the long feathered part of the seed, at the entrance of holes made by mice on the banks; and probably in hard seasons, the seed may yield these creatures part of their supply. The clematis plant possesses the power of preserving its verdure, and even thriving in situations and seasons when most other shrubby vegetation fails or languishes."*

The autumnal-equinox, when day and night are again equal over the whole globe, happens about the twenty-third of September. This, as well as the vernal, is generally attended with storms, which beat down much of the fruit yet remaining on the trees.

By the end of this month, the leaves of many trees have their verdure impaired, and begin to put on their autumnal colours; which, however, are not complete till the ensuing month.

* Journal of a Naturalist.

The first trees that bespeak the declining year are the Spanish chestnut, sycamore, poplar and lime, which generally begin to shed their leaves about the equinox. "Most persons must have observed that the upper surface of the leaves of the sycamore is blotched with dark coloured spots in autumn; this leaf is detached by the earliest frosts, and falling to the ground, the spots commence their operations by corroding away the portions of the leaf that surrounds them, but continue attached themselves, appearing as raised, shining, vermicular lines."

Towards the end of this month, the ivy-tree blossoms, the last almost of Flora's train. Bees and other insects are excessively fond of the nectar with which the flowers abound, and in bright weather may be seen buzzing about them in great numbers with the busiest industry; even before their expansion they are frequently resting upon them, as if impatient to partake of the sweets they contain.

From this tree exudes in small quantities,

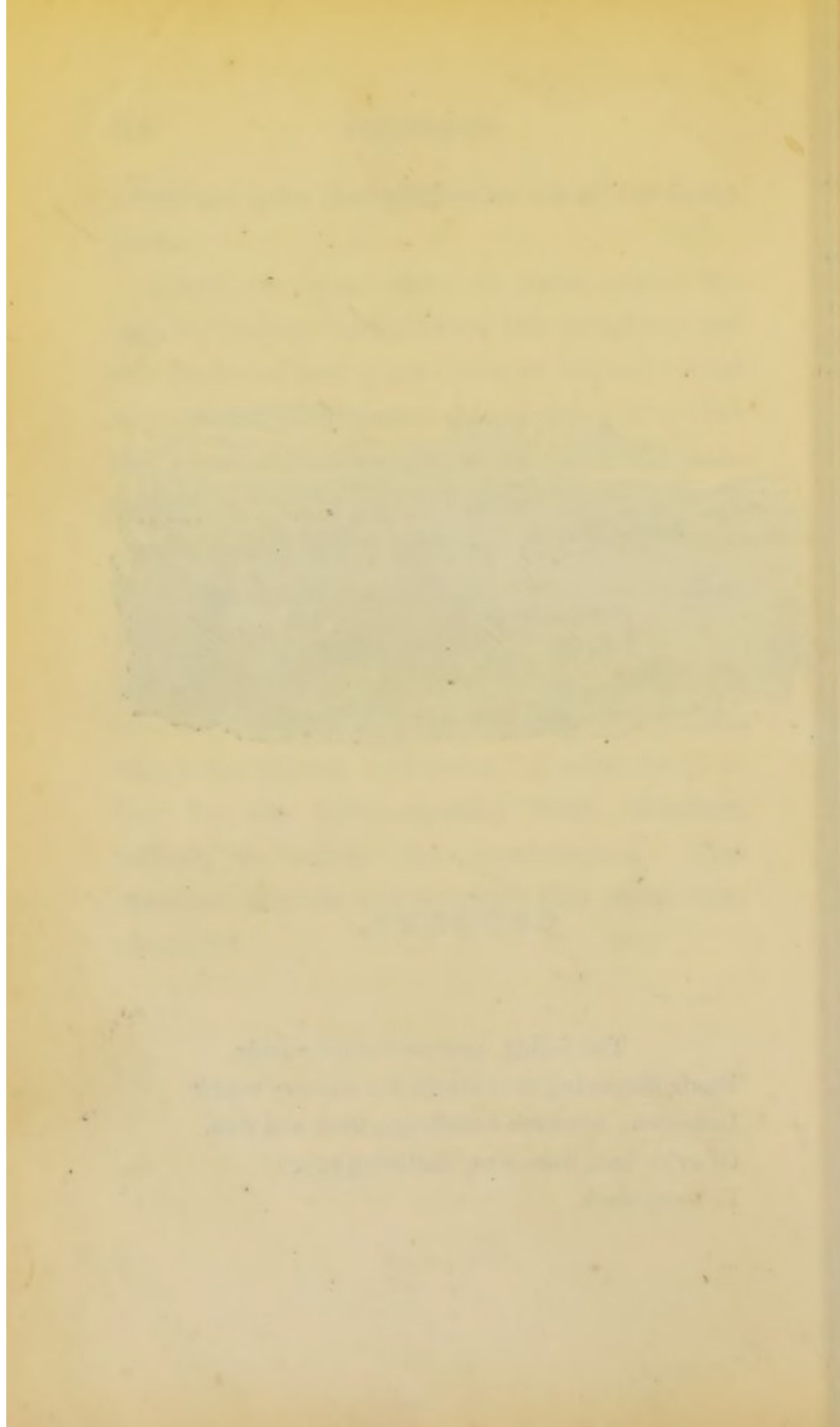
a fragrant gum that retains its odour for many years.

About the same time, in some parts, the meadow saffron embellishes the meadows and rich pastures, and gives them an almost vernal appearance : it is remarkable of this plant, that the blossoms spring up alone, and are succeeded by leaves and seed-vessels the following summer. The stamens of this flower are gathered, and dried into flat square cakes, for medicinal purposes. In times past, it was used as an ingredient in cookery. It is alluded to by Shakspeare in the Winter's Tale, where the clown, reckoning up what he is to buy for the sheep-shearing feast, mentions saffron, to colour the warden-pies. Rich meadows are the soil in which this plant most abounds.



OCTOBER.

The fading, many-coloured woods,
Shade deepening over shade, the country round
Imbrown; a crowded umbrage, dusk and dun,
Of ev'ry hue, from wan, declining green
To sooty dark.



OCTOBER.

OCTOBER, so named from two Latin words, *octo* and *imber*, although now the tenth month in our calendar, was formerly the eighth in the calendar of Romulus: by our Saxon ancestors called *Wyn-monat*, or wine-month.

The great business of nature with respect to the vegetable creation at this season, is *dissemination*. Plants having gone through the progressive stages of springing, flowering, and seeding, have at length brought to maturity the rudiments of a future progeny, which are now to be committed to the fostering bosom of the earth. This being done, the parent vegetable, if of the *herbaceous* kind, either totally dies, or

perishes as far as it rose above ground ; if a tree or shrub, it loses all its tender parts which the spring and summer had put forth. Seeds are scattered by the hand of nature in various manners. The winds, which at this time arise, disperse far and wide many seeds which are curiously furnished with feathers or wings for this purpose. Hence plants with such seeds are, of all, the most universally to be met with ; as dandelion, groundsel, rag-wort, and thistles. Other seeds, by the means of hooks, lay hold of passing animals, and are thus carried to distant places. The common burs are examples of this contrivance. Many are contained in berries, which being eaten by birds, the seeds are discharged again uninjured, and grow where they happen to fall. Thus carefully has nature provided for the distribution and propagation of plants.

The gloom of the falling year is in some measure enlivened, during this month especially, by the variety of colours, some lively and beautiful, put on by the fading leaves of trees and shrubs.

It is just at this point of time, when the trees and shrubs exhibit such a variety of tints, that landscape painters are particularly fond of exercising their art.

Those virgin leaves, of purest vivid green,
Which charmed ere yet they trembled on the trees,
Now cheer the sober landscape in decay :
The lime first fading ; and the golden birch,
With bark of silver hue ; the moss-grown oak,
Tenacious of its leaves of russet brown ;
The ensanguined dog-wood ; and a thousand tints
Which Flora, dressed in all her pride of bloom,
Could scarcely equal, decorate the groves.

To these temporary colours are added the more durable ones of ripened berries, a variety of which now enrich our hedges. Among these are particularly distinguished the hip, the fruit of the wild rose ; the haw, of the hawthorn ; the sloe, of the black-thorn ; the black-berry, of the bramble ; and the berries of the alder, holly, and woody night-shade, and of the spindle tree, the last of a most beautiful pink colour. These are a providential supply for the birds during the winter season ; and it is said that they are most plentiful when the ensuing winter is to be most severe.

The common martin, whose nest, hung under the eaves of our houses, affords so agreeable a spectacle of parental fondness and assiduity, usually disappears in October. As this, though one of the smallest of the swallow-kind, stays the latest, its emigration to distant climates is less probable than that of the others. The sand-martin, which breeds in holes in the sandy banks of rivers, and about cliffs and quarries, most probably passes the winter in a torpid state in those holes.

The Royston, or hooded crow, which migrates northward to breed, returns about the beginning of this month. At the same time the woodcock is first seen on our eastern coasts; though the great body of them does not arrive till November or December. Various kinds of water-fowl, which breed in the northern regions, approach our coasts at this season. About the middle of the month, wild-geese quit the fens, and go up to the rye-lands, where they pluck the young corn.

The weather about this time is sometimes extremely misty, with a perfect calm. The

ground is covered with spiders' webs innumerable, crossing the path, and extended from one shrub to another. It is a frequent appearance in this season, and a certain indication of a fine and warm day.

Mr. White gives the following account of them, in his History of Selborne. "The remark that I shall make on these cobweb-like appearances, called gossamer, is, that strange and superstitious as the notions about them were formerly, nobody in these days doubts but that they are the real production of small spiders, which swarm in the fields in fine weather in autumn, and have a power of shooting out webs from their tails, so as to render themselves buoyant and lighter than air. Every day in fine weather, in autumn chiefly, do I see those spiders shooting out their webs and mounting aloft; they will go off from your finger, if you will take them into your hand."

These webs are often formed into long white filaments, and may be seen floating in the air; to this appearance Shakspeare alludes—

A lover may bestride the *gossamer*
 That idles in the wanton summer air,
 And yet not fall, so light is vanity.

In the time of Chaucer this phenomenon seems
 not to have been accounted for:

As sore some wondir on the cause of thundir
 Onn ebb and flode, on *gosomer*, and mist,
 And onn all things, till that the cause is wist.

Now, by the cool declining year condensed,
 Descend the copious exhalations, checked
 As up the middle sky unseen they stole,
 And roll the doubling fogs around the hill.

* * * * * Thence expanding far,
 The huge dusk, gradual, swallows up the plain ;
 Vanish the woods ; the dim-seen river seems
 Sullen, and slow, to roll the misty wave.
 Even in the height of noon opprest, the sun
 Sheds, weak and blunt, his wide-refracted ray ;
 Whence glaring oft, with many a broadened orb,
 He frights the nations. Indistinct on earth,
 Seen through the turbid air, beyond the life
 Objects appear ; and wildered, o'er the waste
 The shepherd stalks gigantic.

THOMSON.

This month is the height of the hunting
 season. The temperature of the weather is
 peculiarly favourable to the sport ; and, as the

products of the earth are all got in, little damage is done by the horsemen in pursuing their chase across the fields.

All now is free as air, and the gay pack
In the rough bristly stubbles range unblamed ;
No widow's tears o'erflow, no secret curse
Swells in the farmer's breast, which his pale lips
Trembling conceal, by his fierce landlord awed ;
But courteous now he levels every fence,
Joins in the common cry, and halloos loud,
Charmed with the rattling thunder of the field.

SOMERVILLE.

This is the season in which the fly-fisher enjoys some of his principal sport, in search of the grayling, a very scarce fish in this country. "I cannot understand," says the late Sir Humphry Davy, why it should be so; it is abundant in many districts on the continent, but in this island is found I believe only in a few rivers, and does not exist I think either in Ireland or Scotland. It is found in the Avon, the Ure, and the Wye." "Much might be said both of his smell and taste, but I shall only tell you, that St. Ambrose, the

glorious bishop of Milan, who lived when the church kept fasting days, calls him the flower fish, or flower of fishes."*

It is usually in October that the bee-hives are despoiled of their honey. As long as flowers are plentiful, the bees continue adding to their store; but when these fail, they are obliged to begin feeding on the honey they have already made. From this time, therefore, the hive grows less and less valuable. Its condition is judged of by its weight. The common method of getting at the honey is, by destroying the bees with the fumes of burning brimstone. The humane THOMSON exclaims against this practice:

Ah! see where, robbed, and murdered, in that pit
Lies the still-heaving hive! at evening snatched
Beneath the cloud of guilt-concealing night,
And fixed o'er sulphur; while, not dreaming ill,
The happy people in their waxen cells
Sat, tending public cares, and planning schemes
Of temperance, for winter poor; rejoiced
To mark, full flowing round, their copious stores.
Sudden the dark oppressive steam ascends;
And, used to milder scents, the tender race,

* Walton.

By thousands, tumble from their honeyed domes,
Convolved, and agonizing in the dust.
And was it then for this you roamed the spring,
Intent from flower to flower ? for this you toiled,
Ceaseless, the burning summer-heats away ?
For this in autumn searched the blooming waste,
Nor lost one sunny gleam ; for this sad fate !

This cruel necessity may be prevented by using hives or boxes properly contrived ; or by employing fumes which will stupify, but not kill them. In this case, however, enough of the honey must be left for their subsistence during the winter.

Pheasant shooting is commenced this month. The preservation of the pheasant, although it has been long naturalised in this country, must be referred, not so much to the wildness of its nature, as to the care and expense incurred by great landed proprietors, without which care it is not improbable that it would have been long since extinct. Its favourite haunts are thick underwood, and long grass, where it conceals itself during the day, resorting to the adjoining fields at dawning and sunset for the purposes

of feeding. "In many of the large preserves in the southern counties of England, the breed is supported by great numbers being hatched under domestic fowls and reared in confinement, then set at liberty as soon as they are fully able to provide for themselves. But in the northern counties this mode of replenishing the stock is seldom attempted, as these birds are prepared, by their natural economy, to increase very rapidly, and will do so wherever due attention is paid to their preservation. In Northumberland, the ring-necked variety is most prevalent, and has nearly superseded the common kind."*

In most of the wine countries of Europe, the vintage takes place in October. The grape is one of the latest fruits in ripening. When gathered, they are immediately pressed, and the juice is fermented, like that of apples in making cyder. A great variety of wines are produced from the different kinds of grapes, and the diversity of climates in which they grow. In England, this fruit does not ripen

* Selby's Ornithology.

constantly enough to be worth cultivation for the purpose of making wine.

This month is particularly chosen, on account of its mild temperature, for the brewing of malt liquor designed for long keeping, which is therefore commonly called Old October.

The farmer continues to sow his winter-corn during this month; and wheat is frequently not all sown till the end of it. When the weather is too wet for this business, he ploughs up the stubble-fields for winter-fallows. Acorns are sown for young plantations at this time; and forest and fruit trees are planted.

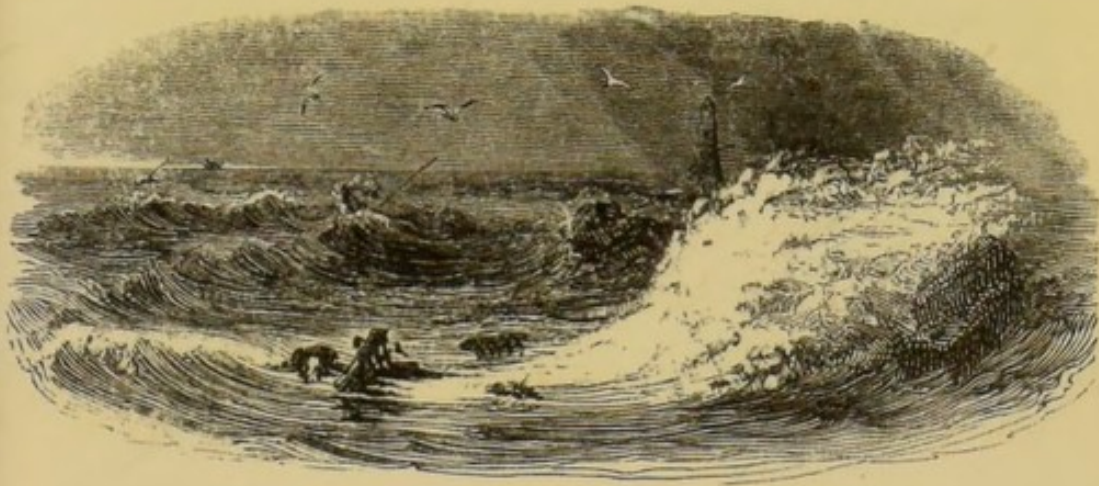
At the very close of the month, a few flowers still cheer the eye; and there is a second blow of some kinds, particularly of the woodbine. But the scent of all these late flowers is comparatively faint. The dahlia, a recent addition to our garden flowers, a native of Mexico, makes a brilliant display, not only from the beauty of its form, but from the great variety of its colours.

About the end of this month, or the beginning of the next, generally happens one or more

of those iron nights (as they are called in Sweden) when a sharp frost destroys the more tender plants, as nasturtions, French-beans, all the cucumber family; and shocks and disfigures the more hardy ones: this crisis, whenever it happens, produces a very great change in the vegetable kingdom, and is such a shock to Flora's charms as she cannot recover that year.

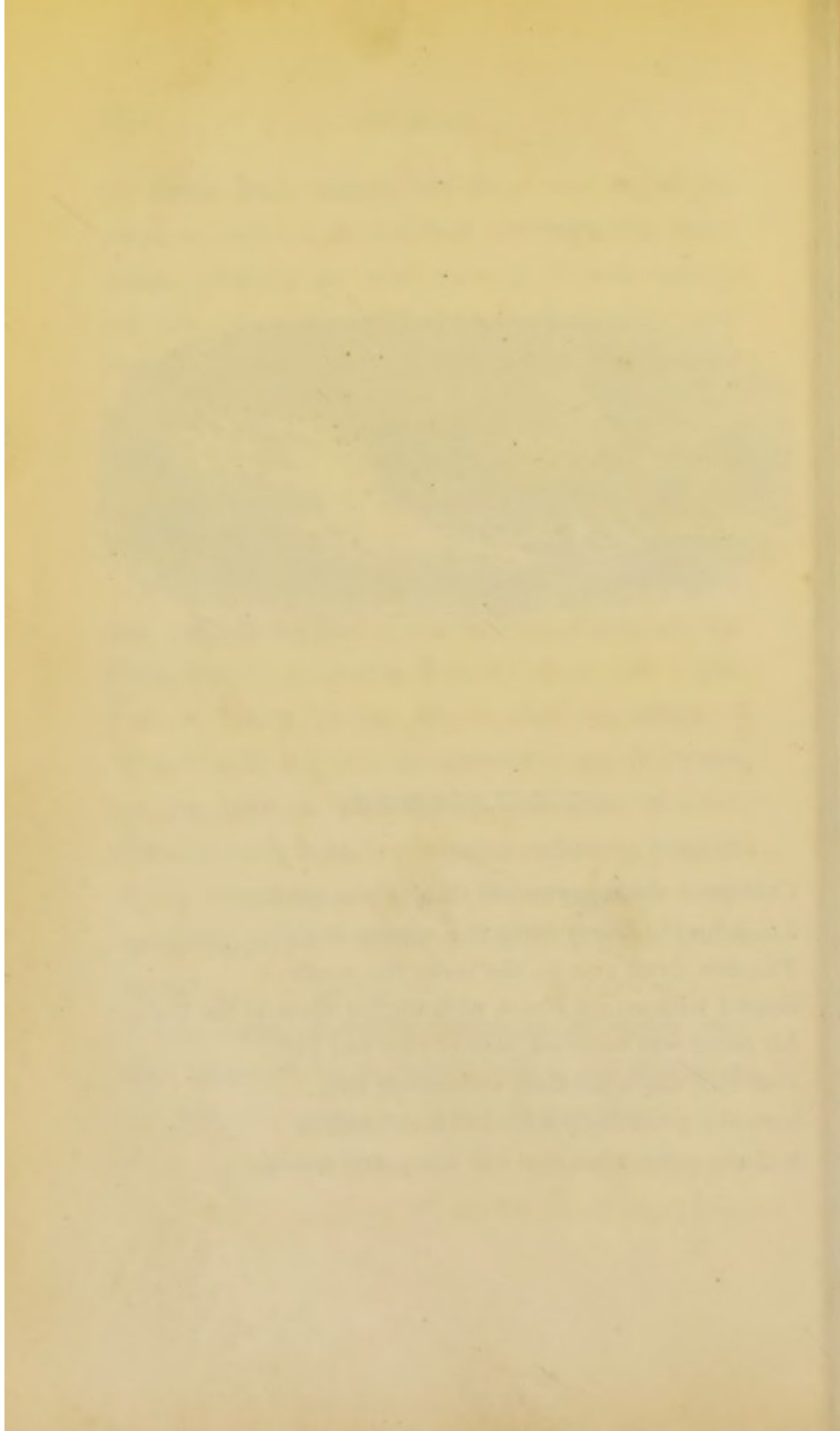
Monsieur Bouvard's valuable paper upon the meteorological observations made at the Observatory of Paris, deduced from the registers of many years, shews that the days of lowest and highest temperature in the year, are the 14th of January and the 15th of July, differing only one day from an accurate interval of six months, and each following the corresponding solstice at an interval of twenty-five days.

The days of equal temperature have been also observed and noted, which at Paris are the 22d of April and 20th of October.



NOVEMBER.

Cold grew the foggy morn, the day was brief,
Loose on the cherry hung the crimson leaf;
The dew dwelt ever on the herb; the woods
Roared with strong blasts, with mighty showers the floods:
All green was vanished, save of pine and yew,
That still displayed their melancholy hue,
Save the green holly with its berries red,
And the green moss that o'er the gravel spread.



NOVEMBER.

NOVEMBER, like the two preceding months, is derived from two Latin words, when its station in the Roman calendar rendered its derivation more appropriate: by the Saxons it was termed *Wint-monat*, in allusion to the winds that frequently prevail at this season.

As the preceding month was marked by the change, so this is distinguished by the fall of the leaf. This last is so striking a circumstance, that the whole declining season of the year is often, in common language, named the Fall. There is something extremely melancholy in this gradual process, by which the trees are stripped of all their beauty, and left

so many monuments of decay and desolation. The first of poets has deduced from this quick succession of springing and falling leaves, an apt comparison for the fugitive races of men :

Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground.
Another race the following spring supplies ;
They fall successive, and successive rise :
So generations in their course decay ;
So flourish these, when those are passed away.

POPE'S HOMER.

This loss of verdure, together with the shortened days, the diminished warmth, and frequent rains, justify the title of the gloomy month of November : and other animals seem to sympathise with man in feeling it as such.

In pensive guise
Oft let me wander o'er the russet mead,
And through the saddened grove, where scarce is heard
One dying strain, to cheer the woodman's toil.
Haply some widowed songster pours his plaint,
Far, in faint warblings, through the tawny copse ;
While congregated thrushes, linnets, larks,
And each wild throat, whose artless strains so late
Swelled all the music of the swarming shades,

Robbed of their tuneful souls, now shivering sit
On the dead tree, a dull despondent flock ;
With not a brightness waving o'er their plumes,
And nought save chattering discord in their note.

THOMSON.

Intervals of clear and pleasant weather, however, frequently occur ; and in general, the autumnal months are, in our island, softer and less variable than the correspondent ones in spring. It long continues

The pale descending year, yet pleasing still.

In fair weather, the mornings are somewhat frosty ; but the hoar frost, or thin ice, soon vanishes after sun-rise.

The lengthened night elapsed, the morning shines
Serene, in all her dewy beauty bright,
Unfolding fair the last autumnal day.
And now the mounting sun dispels the fog ;
The rigid hoar-frost melts before his beam ;
And, hung on every spray, on every blade
Of grass, the myriad dew-drops twinkle round.

THOMSON.

When November's winds have stripped the
sycamore of its every leaf, jackdaws may be

seen sitting in pairs, side by side, upon the naked branches. They seem fond of preening each other's heads: and as they mostly leave the trees in pairs, and in pairs return, in all probability their union is not dissolved when the young no longer need parental aid. Of the mischievous habits of this bird, an entertaining account is recorded in Mr. Loudon's valuable Magazine of Natural History, which we here take the liberty of borrowing for the amusement of our reader.

“In relation to the habits of jackdaws, I have an incident (it can scarcely be called a habit) to report, which, I think, will shew that this bird, like others of

The houseless rovers of the sylvan world,

has a just sense of the value of expediency. At Cambridge, then, there is good accommodation for jackdaws, in the numerous receptacles for their nests which the thirteen, or more, parish churches, and many college buildings, supply; and in the sufficiency (so one would suppose) of sticks for their nests which the trees in the

grounds of the colleges, and elsewhere around the town, afford. Jackdaws are, whether in consequence or not, comparatively numerous at Cambridge. The botanic garden there has three of its four sides enclosed by thickly built parts of the town, and has five parish churches and five colleges within a short flight of it. The jackdaws inhabiting (at least, for a certain time in each year) these and other churches and colleges had, in the years 1815 to 1818, and, doubtless, had for years before, and have since, discovered that the wooden labels placed before the plants whose names they bore, in the botanic garden, would well enough serve the same purpose as twiggy sticks off trees, and that they had the greater convenience of being prepared ready for their use, and placed very near home. A large proportion of the labels used in this garden were made out of deal laths, and were about nine inches long, and an inch or more broad; and, although of this size, were, as they were thin, when dry, pretty light. To these the jackdaws would help themselves freely when-

ever they could do so without molestation ; and the times at which they could do this were, early in the morning, before the gardeners commenced working for the day, and while they were absent from the garden at their meals ; and the jackdaws would sometimes fetch away labels, during the gardeners' working hours, from one part of the garden, when they observed the gardeners occupied in another, as was often the case in their attending to the plants in the glass houses, etc. To describe the mode of action in all by that of one : a jackdaw would grasp a label edgewise in its beak, and draw it out of the soil ; and, as this was pretty friable and light, it could usually extract it with but little difficulty : but where the label happened to stand in a more cohesive soil, or to have been more deeply infixcd, it would pull the label first to one side, then to the opposite one ; and, by persevering in this process of leverage, either effect the extraction of it, or tire itself and leave it. As soon as it had extracted one, it proceeded to balance it in its mouth ; letting it fall, and picking it up

again, until it had ascertained the place at which it could be held in equilibrium; when it flew off with it. Those who are aware how closely some species of the grasses, garlic, and umbelliferous plants resemble each other, and who, consequently, know how needful it is to prefix labels to them as remembrancers of their names, will readily perceive that much inconvenience arose from the jackdaws' appropriation of the labels; and this, especially, when they removed, as they sometimes did, the labels from sown seeds, as the plants arising from these seeds must, in some species, grow for a year or more before their names could be ascertained. I cannot give a probable idea of the number of labels which the jackdaws annually removed; but have more than once been told, by persons who had ascended the tower of Great St. Mary's church, and the towers or steeples of other churches, that wooden labels, bearing botanical inscriptions, were abounding in these places. The house of the late Dr. (I think a Dr.) Kerrich, in Free School Lane, was close beside the

botanic garden ; and the shaft of one of the chimneys of his house was stopped up below, or otherwise rendered a fit place of resort for jackdaws. From this chimney-shaft Dr. Ker-rich's man-servant got out, on one occasion, eighteen dozen of the said deal labels ! and these he brought to Mr. Arthur Biggs, the curator of the botanic garden : I saw them delivered and received. This fact, however, gives very little information as to the number of labels annually removed from the garden by the jackdaws, as I am quite without a knowledge of the number of the years which intervened the jackdaws' deposition of the first label into the chimney-shaft and the withdrawal of the eighteen dozen. This number of labels, and the fact of the occurrence of plant-labels on other buildings about the town, prove that, in general terms, the aggregate of labels lost from time to time could not be an inconsiderable one."—J. D.

High winds frequently happen in November, which at once strip the trees of their faded leaves, and reduce them to their winter state of nakedness.

O'er the sky the leafy deluge streams ;
Till, choked and matted with the dreary shower,
The forest-walks, at every rising gale,
Roll wide the withered waste, and whistle bleak.

THOMSON.

Rooks again resort to their nest-trees. Flocks of wood-pigeons, or stock-doves, the latest in their arrival of the birds of passage, visit us. Woodcocks, a few of which may be seen in the last month, now arrive in greater numbers. They generally come with northerly or easterly winds, when winter visits the northern countries with its greatest severity. They do not arrive in large flocks, but keep dropping in singly, or sometimes in pairs. They are never seen to reach our coast ; but have the instinct to land only in the night, or in thick weather ; and are frequently found in the morning, in any ditch which affords shelter, particularly if they have met with adverse gales on their voyage.

Ducks, and various wild-fowl now visit our shores in large flocks, spreading themselves over all the loughs and marshy wastes in the

British isles. The number brought to market in the season is very considerable; Pennant instances one, in which thirty-one thousand two hundred ducks, were sold in London only, from ten decoys, near Wainfleet in Lincolnshire. By a beautiful provision of nature, they are clothed in a plumage the most capable of resisting the severity of the cold, and as they are now in the highest season for the table, so are their feathers most valuable for the purposes for which they are used.

Flocks of fieldfares and redwings, driven hither by the rigorous winters of the north, arrive here this month in large numbers; they afford great practice to the juvenile sportsman.

Now the farmer strives during this month to finish all his ploughing of fallows; and then lays up his implements till the ensuing year. Cattle and horses are taken out of the exhausted pastures, and kept in the house or yard. Hogs are put up to fatten. Sheep are turned into the turnip-field, or, in stormy weather, fed with hay at the rick.

Bees now require to be moved under shelter,

and the pigeons in the dove-house require to be fed.

Tortoises bury themselves under ground for the winter.

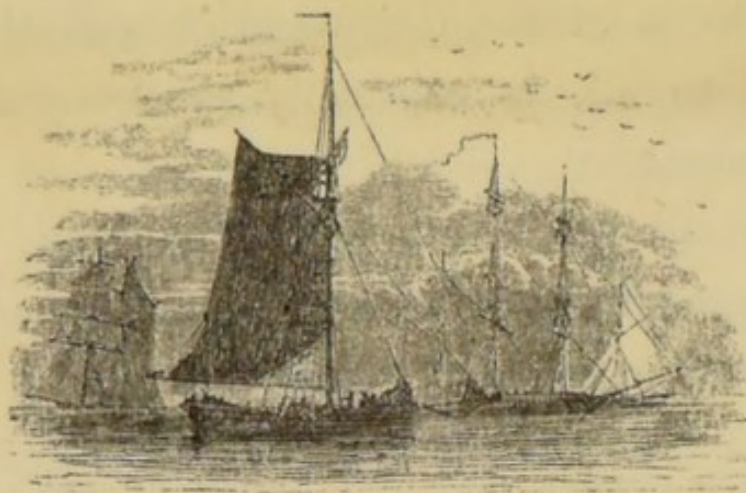
The season has now become unfavourable for the admirer of nature to pursue his observations in the open air, and now is the time to avail himself of comparing by in-door study with his books, the different collections which the past season has enabled him to obtain, and to arrange them in their proper order. This habit of regularity and classification, so useful to all, is especially necessary to the naturalist.

For all this occupation, the long winter evenings which the close of the year affords, present favourable opportunities.

Come evening, once again, season of peace ;
Return, sweet evening, and continue long !
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron steps slow moving, while the night
Treads on thy sweeping train, one hand employed
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charged for man,
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day.

—— Composure is thy gift ;
And whether I devote thy gentle hours
To books, to music, or the poet's toil,
To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit,
I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.

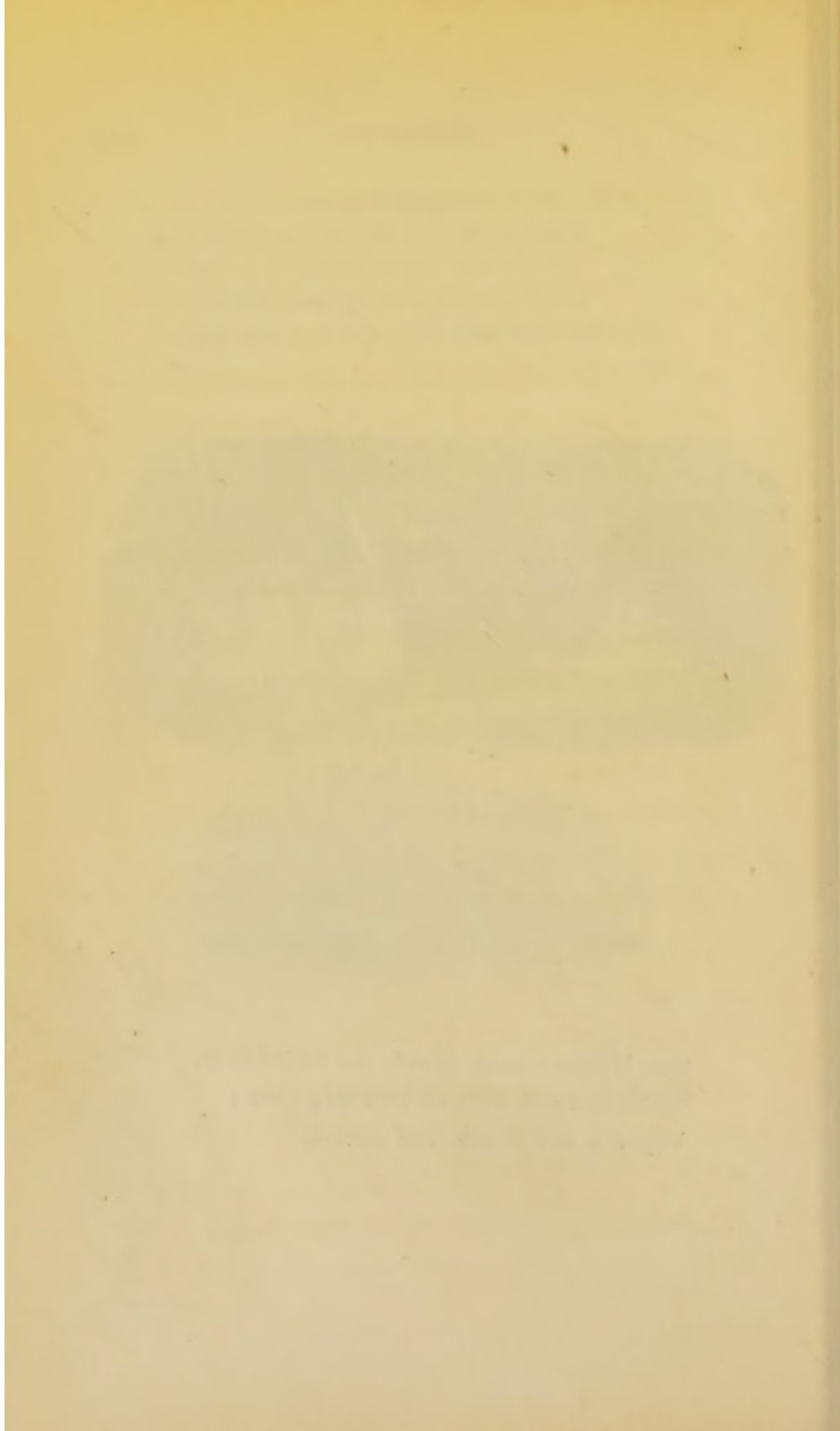
CGWPER.





DECEMBER.

See, Winter comes, to rule the varied year,
Sullen and sad, with all its rising train;
Vapours, and clouds, and storms.



DECEMBER.

THIS month still retains its original name, derived from the Latin words *decem* and *imber*, although its place in the calendar is different from that originally assigned to it. By our Saxon ancestors it was styled *Winter-monat*, i. e. winter month: upon their conversion to Christianity, they named it *Heligh-monat*, or holy-month.

The changes which take place in the face of nature during this month, are little more than so many advances in the progress towards universal gloom and desolation.

No mark of vegetable life is seen,
No bird to bird repeats his tuneful call,
Save the dark leaves of some rude evergreen,
Save the lone red-breast on the moss-grown wall.

SCOTT.

The day now rapidly decreases ; the weather becomes foul and cold ; and, as SHAKSPEARE expresses it,

The rain and wind beat dark December.

In this climate, however, no great and continued severity of cold usually takes place before the close of the month.

Several of the wild quadrupeds now take to their winter concealments, which they either seldom or never quit during the winter. Of these, some are in an absolutely torpid or sleeping state, taking no food for a considerable time ; others are only drowsy and inactive, and continue to feed on provisions which they have hoarded up. In our mild climate few become entirely torpid. Bats do so, and retire early to caves and holes, where they remain the whole winter, suspended by the hind feet, and closely wrapped up in the membranes of the fore feet. As their food is chiefly insects, they can lay up no store for the winter, and therefore must be starved, did not nature thus render food unnecessary for them. Dormice also lie torpid the greater part of the winter, though they lay up stores

of provision. A warm day sometimes revives them, when they eat a little, but soon relapse into their former condition.

Squirrels, and various kinds of field-mice, provide magazines of food against winter, but are not known to become torpid. The badger, the hedgehog, and the mole, keep close in their winter-quarters in the northern regions, and sleep away great part of the season.

“Hedgehogs,” says Mr. Knapp, “were formerly an article of food; but this diet was pronounced to be dry, and not nutritive, ‘because he putteth forth so many prickles.’ This little quadruped, upon suspicion of harm, rolls itself up in a ball, hiding his nose and eyes in the hollow of his stomach, and thus the common organs of perception—hearing, seeing and smelling—are precluded from action; but by the sensibility of the spines, he seems fully acquainted with every danger that may threaten him, and upon any attempt to uncoil himself, if these spines be touched, he immediately retracts, assuming his globular form again, awaiting a more secure period for retreat.”

Little was known of the habits of the mole, until M. St. Hilaire, the eminent French naturalist, brought to light some interesting particulars concerning this little animal : the manner in which she forms a receptacle for her young is very curious : in order to render the receptacle which she and her young occupy, not liable to be injured by the rain, she makes it almost even with the ground, and higher up than the runs, which serve as channels to carry off the water.

The place of her abode is chosen with the greatest care, generally constructed at the foot of a wall, or near a hedge or tree, where it has no chance of being broken in. The nest for the young is composed of blades of wheat, with which the mole forms a sort of mattrass. The power of smelling in the mole is very acute, and this sense in all probability directs her in the search of food. Her search for prey generally takes place in the morning and evening, when the feathered creation are usually feeding, and whose means of subsistence must be greatly increased by this little animal driving worms to the surface of the earth.

The early vegetables which now flourish are the numerous tribes of mosses, and the lichens or liver-worts. The mosses put forth their singular and minute parts of fructification during the winter months; and offer a most curious spectacle to the botanist, at a time when all the rest of Nature is dead to him. Lichens cover the ditch banks, and other neglected spots, with a leather-like substance, which in some countries serve as food both to men and cattle. The rein-deer lichen is the greatest treasure of the poor Laplanders, who depend upon it for the support of their only species of domestic cattle, during their tedious winters. A curious and beautiful variety called the stag-moss, from its resemblance to the horns of that animal, is found in great abundance near Leith Hill, Surrey.

On the twenty-first of December happens the winter-solstice, or shortest day; when the sun is something less than eight hours above the horizon even in the southern parts of the island. Soon after this, frost and snow generally begin to set in for the rest of the winter.

The farmer has little to do out of doors in the course of this month. His chief attention is bestowed on the feeding and management of his cattle, and various matters of household economy.

The festival of Christmas occurs very seasonably, to cheer this comfortless period of the year. Great preparations are made for it in the country, and plenty of rustic dainties are provided for its celebration according to the rites of ancient hospitality. Thus the old year steals away scarcely marked, and unlamented; and a new one begins, with lengthening days and brighter skies, inspiring fresh hopes and pleasing expectations.

Mysterious round ! what skill, what force divine,
Deep-felt, in these appear ; a simple train ;
Yet so delightful, mixed with such kind art,
Such beauty and beneficence combined ;
Shade, unperceived, so softening into shade ;
And all so forming an harmonious whole ;
That, as they still succeed, they ravish still !

THOMSON.

