

Chats by the Weather Man.

Wed. Jan. 5, 1927

PROGRAM.....

RELEASE.....

ANNOUNCEMENT: Every season has its music. In Spring there's the gentle song of the whispering rain and the call of nesting birds. Summer comes with the lazy, endless chattering of countless tiny insects. Rustling leaves and the sig of the wind in the sheaves herald Autumn. But great, bold, blustering Winter has his howling blizzards and rattling sleet to make us glad we're safe indoors. A spokesman for the U. S. Weather Bureau is going to tell you more about "Winter's Music" in this short talk tonight. So poke up the fire and gather 'round. The talk is based on articles by Dr. Humphreys and other Weather Bureau officials.

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'Twas the night before New Year's and all through the house not a creature was stirring.....And yet the house seemed alive with mysterious sounds.

Three of us were gathered around the fire. Earlier in the evening the fire had roared and crackled. The great, hungry flames of crimson, orange, green and blue had leaped up from the wood as though they wanted to go up the chimney and away on the wings of the wind that sang outside. But these dancing flames seemed to symbolize the fresh, eager New Year.

We were so quiet we could hear the fire softly talk to us.

PTH.....PTH.....PTH, said the fire.

"The fire is treading snow", said my grandfather. "It means we'll have more snow tomorrow".

I had heard this quaint, old saying before and resolved to ask our friend, a weather man, who sat on my right, about it.

"What makes the fire talk?" I asked.

"I have often wondered that myself", he replied. "And I suppose countless other wathers by the fire in all ages have asked the same question. You only hear the fire talking when the wood is well burned down and there's a bed of glowing coals deep down in the grate. I suppose these faint sounds are the tiny explosions of combustible gases that come up from hot bits of wood and charcoal buried deep in the embers. When they hear these faint, PTH, PTHS, some folks say, 'the fire is pitting snow'. Folks who have sat by a thousand dying winter fires say the sound means that it's going to snow the next day."

"It does mean that", said grandfather. "Wait until tomorrow----and see".

"Perhaps you think the popping of the fire is a sign of snow because folks usually build big fires on the dark, dank nights before snow storms come," said the weather man.

Then we grew quiet again. The night was magic, peaceful indoors. But outside a great storm was brewing. How the wind howled about the eaves! Roared up in great sweeps ---then died away, whispering and whirring.

Then softly on the window panes there came a faint tick ---ticking, as though some one had thrown grains of rice against the glass. This was followed by another and another --faster and faster. A continuous rattle. Then it died down as it had come.

"It's hailing", said I.

"Not hail," said grandfather, "sleet".

"He is right", our weather friend told us. "Sleet comes like that when the temperature is only a degree or so below freezing -- and a storm is gathering. It's good to have a shelter over your head when the sleet ticks at the window pane".

"What is sleet?" I asked.

"It's really winter's hail", replied the weather man. "There are three kinds of hail, you know. Each kind occurs at a different season and is formed in a different way. The hail that occurs in winter consists of small, clear pellets of ice. These little pellets are about the size of large raindrops--- they are raindrops, in fact -- frozen raindrops. Soft hail consists of small, white pellets of what looks like compacted snow. It usually comes in small quantities, generally in March and April, but occasionally in Autumn. The only time hail occurs in summer is during a thunderstorm. These hailstones are usually large. Some have been known that were several inches through.....They often do great damage."

"I remember when I was a boy", began grandfather. We leaned forward to catch his story. "That was long ago", he continued, "and we used to have some hard winters in those days. I'll never forget that Winter we moved from the Storm River country! The river was frozen over and we drove our sleighs right across it from Christmas until the last of February. I remember the snow drifted so high that it came up to the eaves in the back of our house and we couldn't look out the back window. One day a neighbor of mine, who lived down the creek about 5 miles, came to visit us. He drove up and hollered for me to come out. I went to the door and I could see my breath freeze in the air. 'Please shut the door', my wife called. 'We'll all freeze to death'. So I shut the door. Then Jim called out, 'Hey, there, Hyrum --- Where's the gate?' 'You come right in', I called out. 'Fence was covered with snow long ago.' So he drove over the gate, on the snow crust. How the wheels of the wagons, and the runners of the sleighs did sing on the frozen roads! We don't have winters like those these days. I reckon you folks of this century have forgotten what it is to bundle up and go for an old-fashioned sleigh ride.

You go for auto rides instead. I remember we'd always cut the corners fast. 'Cutting a shine', we called it. It was fun because it threw everybody into everybody else's arms. But those days are gone forever", and grandfather stopped talking and looked into the glowing fire.

"Well, grandfather," said the weather man, "The chances are that winters today are about what the old ones were. The records show that our snows are not decreasing each year, as our years increase. The main reason why we don't get good sleighing these days is probably because the increased use of automobiles makes it undesired. When we look back on the old days, things always seem different. These memories of ours, are the mental pictures, carried along through the years, and perhaps distorted. We remember the unusually hard winters. Extremes stay in our minds. We forget the average. Look back on the place where you spent your childhood days. If you go back there now and look things over you'll probably find that the old house is not more than half as large as we imagined it to be. The barn is much smaller. That old hill where we coasted when we were children, is much shorter and less steep than we remember it. The river is a mere creek and the bridge over it -- which we considered one of the greatest structures in the world -- is found to be small, and roughly built. Thus we account for the erroneous statements about the weather in the past. These statements of the old days are not made from records -- and they are not made with the intention of misrepresenting the facts."

Again we sat lost in silence and thought. We looked straight into the dying fire on the hearth.

The wind whistled and whined -- then died. It was cold. Every now and then crackling sounds -- booms -- and small, mysterious rustles -- came to our ears.

"Many a night I've lain awake in this old house and listened to the joists and rafters crack just like they're cracking tonight", grandfather told us. "If you're worried, these sounds will keep you awake and make you nervous. If you're content, the sounds are a lullaby. Winter's lullaby".

"It's the cold that does it", said the weather man. "The joists contract as they fit into new positions, they crack and boom. Ghostly, fearful sounds, sometimes."

"Is this what causes trees to burst in cold weather?" I asked.

"Partly", said the weather man. "When you hear those 'pistol shots' out in the woods in cold weather, they're probably not pistol shots at all. Those sounds are caused by the outer shells of trees splitting under the great strain caused by the shell's cooling faster -- and shrinking faster -- than the inner wood. You don't hear this very often".

"But when you do hear it, you know it", said grand-dad.

Soon, lulled by winter's music -- the soft, kind, ghostly song of the seasons, --- grandfather fell asleep by the fire.

Good night, to you all.....

ANNOUNCEMENT: This concludes tonight's Weather Chat released by Uncle Sam through Station _____.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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