

PROGRAM Chats by the Weather Man.

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ANNOUNCEMENT: The Weather Man's in a poetic mood tonight. So he's going to talk about rain -- and recite a verse -- and tell a couple good yarns. Rain's very timely just now, so his talk fits in nicely with the weather chats the U. S. Department of Agriculture releases through Station \_\_\_\_\_.

---ooOoo---

A few bursting buds: Plop - Plop -- A gentle shower or two -- some plowmen in the fields -- and perhaps some fat worms peeping from the soil, make an amateur Wordsworth out of me. Oh, I don't mean that Spring makes me write verse. I mean that it makes me want to recite it. So here's a verse -- I don't know who wrote it -- that I'd like to recite for you. It goes like this:

"'Tis like the birthday of the world  
When earth was born in bloom.  
The light is made of many dyes,  
The air is all perfume.  
There are crimson buds, and white, and blue,  
The very rainbow showers  
Have turned to blossom,  
Where they fell, and sown the earth with flowers".

But rain's not always gentle like that, is it? Sometimes it comes in sweeping, wind-blown sheets that rattle the windows and leak through the roof onto the new rug. Reminds me of a yarn one of our weather observers tells of a cloud burst he observed out in the Rockies some years ago. Here's the story, in his own words:

"I was on an excursion with some relatives, up around Silver Plume, near Georgetown Loop, in the mountains West of Denver, Colorado, a number of years ago. It was a hot, sultry day and so, noticing a large patch of snow near the timber line on a neighboring peak -- some 11,000 feet high -- I decided to climb up to the snow and wade in it in the Summer time. It was a kid's idea, but I guess we're all more or less kids at heart -- no matter how old we are.

"Well, I reached the snow and, like the jolly Pat, waded in the snow 'wid me own bare feet'

"The great peaks; Long's Peak, Gray's, Evans', Arapahoe, and Pike's, all near 14,000 feet high, were silent and majestic in the waiting air. All of

the peaks showed dense cumuli clouds nestling on them like giant hens trying to hatch them out. Soon great clouds crept up and hid the lower parts of the mountains. The air became almost as black as midnight and I heard the sinister muttering and rumbling of a thunderstorm far away. Then the storm broke and I had a grand stand seat. The most terrible thunder crashes rolled, and grumbled, and burst through the heavens. Lightning flashes, almost as thick as a man's thigh, sizzled through the air with terrifying cracklings. I think of those sounds even yet, with a shudder.

"The storm rolled down like the approach of a thousand loaded express trains passing each other at high speed. A horizontal wind swept out of the West -- blew upward and eastward -- and almost threw me from the mountain. I was forced to flatten myself on the ground and cling to a scrub pine for life. Great gobs of water, blown by the wind, drenched me -- then fine hail, and later sharp spears of ice -- pelted the mountain side. As the barrel-like cloud blew on darkly with the wind, the straight tempest from the West was followed by blinding sheets of rain. It was a gullywasher -- if there ever was one.

"Well, I hung on till the storm passed on, then shambled wearily down the mountain. As I stumbled along, the sun came out and scorched me. Water-logged and blown, I was more than glad to rejoin my friends at the foot of the peak. I had lost all interest in Summer wading in snow and had developed a healthy respect for mountain storms in general."

Cloud bursts may not be too pleasant, but every man knows that we must have plenty of rain in order to live. Isn't it queer how we depend on the elements, anyway? Not only for our food and clothing. Even for our moods. Take a Summer rain, for example. It's beautiful and clean and exhilarating. It gives the atmosphere an undescribable feel that nothing else can. On a Summer night, when the sky is black and threatening, you feel that something is bound to happen to you and all the world. The winds increase -- the thunder rolls and rolls, increasing to great crashes that seem to rock your house to the foundations. Then the lightning and the rain and the storm slinks away -- as all storms do -- leaving the world quiet and serene. You go to sleep, feeling that everything is indescribably right with the world. You awake next morning to see a world new born. That's what a Summer shower can do.

But that's not all rain can do. We might possibly get along without wind or snow or fog. But we must have rain in proper quantities and distributed in the right averages and extremes or we'll have crop failures -- and famine. In the United States, it's in the growing season of a scant 3 or 4 months that we need that rain always badly. There first must be enough heat to start life growing in the soil -- rain to nourish the plants -- and sunlight enough to ripen the fruit or the grain. Sounds simple, doesn't it -- this great parade of the storms and the sun and growing things. But it's the most complex of all things because it's life itself.

The farmer may think he has a hard job cultivating and harvesting his crops. But if Nature should refuse her assistance for a single season, it would tell a story of bankruptcy and starvation throughout the country. It takes from 12 to 15 inches of rain to mature an ordinary crop in an average American farm territory. This amounts to from 14 to 16 hundred tons of water per acre. Now suppose that Mr. Farmer finds, at the beginning of the season, that he would have to haul this water to his crops or they wouldn't grow. And suppose it cost him a dollar a load. Where would his season's profits go? Well, they'd certainly go on the water wagon. In addition, he'd have to spend additional money to buy fertilizer for his land which the rain washes down from the air.

That's how it is with rainfall, you know. Nothing else will quite do, except in small, isolated areas where artificial rainfall, or irrigation, has been provided against the shortage of rain.

Some regions of the world receive 3 times as much rainfall as others and damage may result from this excessive fall. Heavy rains wash away the soil and there's a constant loss of fertility because of the rain. Millions of tons of soil are carried off into the ocean every year, by the rivers, fed by rain. The famous Yellow River in China, sometimes called the yellow peril or the river of sorrow, has had such vast floods in times past that as many as 50 thousand people have been killed as a result of one tremendous rainfall.

So, you see the results of rain are not always beneficial. But it won't take much deep thought to see that the benefits far out-number the liabilities of Nature's great purifier and enricher. If rain washes away our choices: soil, it breaks down the rocks and makes soil to take its place. If rain washes fertilizer away, it is constantly carrying down from the air more of the same valuable product. Every thunderstorm brings us a fresh supply of ozone to purify the air we breath. Though the rain may cause the poisonous plant and noxious weed to grow and flourish, it also does the same for our bounteous fields of grain and rich orchards full of fruit. Rain has been called the oil of gladness which lubricates the mental and physical machinery of the farmer and so makes us all happier and more prosperous.

And then just look what the rain means to poets -- especially in Spring!

And so good night,....

---ooOoo---

ANNOUNCEMENT: That good night means good bye. At least for this season. For, with this Chat, the Weather Man discontinues his series for the Summer. Watch for him again next Fall. He wants to thank you all for your interest and attention during the year and wishes you all a prosperous and happy Spring and Summer.

# **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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