

CHATS BY THE WEATHER MAN.

Wed., March 21, 1928.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

ANNOUNCEMENT: It's about time for the buds to burst--- for the robins and the larks to show up--- for the warm spring rains to fall. Rain, rain, bee-oo-ti-ful RAIN! Who was it said that? Everybody says it now, but I mean, who said it first? Well--- never mind. Anyhow, this time of year makes the weather man poetic, so watch out! He's going to talk about how spring comes and tell you a lot about rain in today's CHAT, so please stand by.

-ooOOOoo-

A few bursting buds, (Listen! You can almost hear 'em!), a gentle shower or two, some plowmen in the fields, and perhaps a few fat worms peeping from the soil only to be gobbled up by the early birds--- Well, those things almost make a poet out of me. Oh, I don't mean that spring makes me write verse! Too busy just now writing weather reports and such things. But spring does make me think verse--- and sometimes recite some, when the folks will let me. In fact, I'm going to try a little verse on you. Hold your seats--- it's short. But beautiful. All about spring. I don't remember who wrote it, but 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."

Pretty, isn't it? But of course rain isn't always gentle like that. Sometimes rain comes pelting down with the force of little hammers, rather than like flower petals falling to the earth. Sometimes rain comes in sweeping, wind-blown sheets that rattle the windows and leak through the roof onto the new rug that cost 50 dollars. Then you don't feel so poetic about it, eh?

Reminds me of a yarn one of our weather observers tells of a cloud burst he once saw out in the Rocky Mountains. He tells the story this way:

"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 small patch of snow near the timber line on a neighboring peak, I decided to climb to the snow

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and do a little wading in snow, in the summer time appealed to the child in me, Wading in the snow in the summer time appealed to the child in me I guess.

"So that's what I did. Believe me, that cold snow felt good after the long, hot climb up the side of that mountain.

"The great peaks: Long's Peak, Gray's, Evans', Arapahoe, and Pike's--- all near 14 thousand feet high--- were silent and majestic in the still air of that summer day of years ago. I noticed the clouds. All the peaks showed dense cumuli clouds nestling on them like giant grey hens trying to hatch out a mountain. Soon great clouds crept up and hid the lower parts of the mountain. The air became almost as black as midnight and I heard the muttering and rumbling of a thunderstorm far away. The wind howled through the pines, whistling. A few scared little drops of rain were whirled into my face by the wind. Then the storm broke and I had a grandstand seat. Terrible thunder crashed and grumbled and burst from the heavens. Lightning flashes, almost as thick as a man's thigh, sizzled through the air. I shudder even yet when I think of that storm.

"The storm rolled down like a procession of a thousand loaded express trains passing each other at high speed. The wind almost blew me off the mountain and I flattened myself on the ground and held onto a scrub pine for dear life. Great blobs of water, whirled by the wind, drenched me--- then fine hail, and later, sharp tiny spears of ice pelted the mountain side. As the barrel-like cloud swept 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 and then shambled wearily down the mountain side. 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 wading in snow in the summer and had developed a healthy respect for mountain storms in general."

Cloud bursts may not be pleasant, but every one knows that we have to have rain to live. Isn't it queer how we depend on the elements, anyhow? Not alone for food and clothing. Even for our moods, we look to the weather. Take a summer rain, for example. It's beautiful and clean and exhilarating. It gives the atmosphere an indescribable feel that nothing else can give it. On a summer night, when the sky is black and threatening, you know that something is going to happen to you and all the world. The wind comes up---the thunder growls and rumbles, increasing to shattering crashes that seem to rock the house. Then the lightning and then the rain. After a few minutes, it's all over. The wind dies down--- a few light patters of rain on the roof--- and the storm slinks away as mysteriously as it came. But it leaves the world quiet and cool and serene. You go to sleep, feeling that everything is indescribably right with the old world after all. You awake next morning to see the world new born--- the trees and flowers brighter and fresher than ever--- the sky a living, flashing blue. That's what a summer shower can do.

But that's not all that 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 our crops fail and

starvation creeps like a gaunt skeleton upon our homes. In the United States, it's during the growing season of a scant three or four months that we need rain most. There must be enough heat to start life growing in the soil; then rain to feed the plants; then sunlight to ripen the fruit and grain. Sounds simple, doesn't it?--- this great parade of the storms, the sun, and the growing things. But it's one of 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 help for a single season, it would tell a story of bankruptcy and famine throughout the country. It takes from 12 to 15 inches of rain to mature an ordinary crop in an average American farming community. This really amounts to from 14 to 16 hundred tons of water per acre a year. Now, suppose that Mr. Farmer found, at the beginning of the season, that he had to haul all that water to his crops or else they wouldn't grow. And suppose it costs him a dollar a load. Where would his season's profits go? They'd certainly go on the water wagon, seems to me. In addition, he'd have to spend still more money to buy fertilizer, for his land, fertilizer 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, is provided against the shortage of rain.

Some parts of the world get many 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 which are fed by the rain. The famous Yellow River of 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 by one tremendous fall of rain.

So, you see, rain doesn't always come cheerfully and lightly. But it won't take much deep and painful thought to see that the benefits of rain far outnumber the disadvantages. If rain washes away some of our choicest soil, it breaks down the rocks to make new soil. If rain washes some fertilizer away, it is constantly bringing down from the air more of the same valuable substance. Every thunderstorm brings us a fresh supply of ozone to purify the air we breathe. Though the rain may cause the noxious and poisonous weed to grow and flourish, it likewise makes the bounteous fields of grain, the rich orchards, the flowers grow and produce food and beauty. 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 the spring!

We've given you one example of what that means.

-ooOoo-

ANNOUNCEMENT: Station _____ would welcome letters from its radio audience mentioning this weather chat and the other talks in the Weather Man series which Uncle Sam gets out every two weeks. Are there any points on the weather that you would like discussed in these talks? How do you like them? How do you think they can be improved? We'd like to hear from you, so please drop us a line some day.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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