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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A CATERPILLAR WEATHER PROPHET(?)

One of the most familiar kinds of caterpillar is the larva of the moth Isia isabella. It is part black and part yellow. You will find a colored picture of it in Frank E. Lutz's "Field Book of Insects", p. 168, with the following description:

"The larva of this species has caused much comment. Kellogg calls it the 'woolliest woolly bear,' and notes that 'hedgehog' is a popular name. Holland connects the phrase 'to caterpillar' in the sense of quickly yielding to unpleasant circumstances with this species, because, when disturbed, the larva curls up and lies motionless; while Comstock recalls the 'hurrying along like a caterpillar in the fall' when speaking of the larva's apparent haste to find a snug place in which to curl up for the winter. The relative amount of black in the larva's 'fur' varies greatly and is said to foretell weather."

Do you know this alleged weather prophet? In some rural districts he is anxiously examined in the autumn because his coloration is supposed to betoken the character of the succeeding winter. The black parts are said to mean cold weather and the yellow mild. If the front part of the caterpillar is black, the beginning of winter will be cold - and so on.

Of course this is an idle superstition. Lutz tells us that the coloration is related to the moisture conditions of the weather that has gone before. It has nothing whatever to do with the weather that is coming after.

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