

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 16, 1929

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SPRING AND THE POETS

In an amusing essay published in the Forum, Frederick L. Allen complains that many poets write of outdoor spring events in the northeastern United States as if the season ran on the same schedule there as in the British Isles. For years, he says, we have been teaching this highly misleading poetry to the young, who, "reading about the early lark, the daisy and the marigold, have looked out the window at the bare branches whipped by the east wind and have come to the private conclusion that the poets were a cock-eyed lot who went into frenzies over nothing."

Mr. Allen facetiously suggests that, as an alternative to scrapping all this misfit spring poetry, we adopt a "poetry-saving calendar" (after the model of daylight-saving time), in which the first of April is to be called the first of March, and presumably -- though the author of the scheme is rather vague on this point -- all other springtime dates are to be similarly pushed back a month.

Unfortunately this simple plan would not work. March in the British Isles is a milder month than in New York and New England, but April temperatures average pretty much the same on both sides of the ocean, while May in the northeastern United States is decidedly warmer than in Britain. What is true of temperature is likewise true, in a general way, of the programs of biological events in the two regions. Hence the proposed shifting of dates, while bringing a certain amount of March poetry into conformity with facts, would impair the accuracy of April poems, and ruin the poetry of May -- the poets' favorite month.

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