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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed November 27, 1933

WINTER -- OLD AND NEW

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Meteorologically speaking, the "old-fashioned winter" is a myth. In the long run, despite a certain tendency of cold and mild winters to come in bunches, winters do not change from generation to generation. On the other hand, a real and striking change has occurred in the winter environment of the average civilized human being, and in this sense the term "old-fashioned winter" describes a state of affairs belonging to the past rather than the present.

Artificial light and heat, both superior to nature's because they can be graduated and distributed at will, have, along with the various other agencies of modern civilization, transformed winter from the gloomiest and most disagreeable season of the year into the gayest and most comfortable. The extent of this transformation is not always realized today, but we get some conception of it when we examine the art and literature of bygone generations. Consider, for example, any old-fashioned series of pictures representing the four seasons, such as those of Watteau, now often seen in reproduction. The picture of winter usually emphasizes its miseries; those of spring and summer, their joys. The typical feeling of the poets on the same subject are expressed in Thomson's "Seasons," the four sections of which begin as follows:

"Come gentle spring, ethereal mildness, come;
And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud,
While music wakes around, veil'd in a shower
of shadowing roses, on our plains descend."

"From brightening fields of ether fair-disclos'd,
Child of the sun, refulgent summer comes,
In pride of youth"

"Crown'd with the sickle and the wheaten sheaf,
While autumn nodding o'er the yellow plain
Comes jovial on"

"See, winter comes, to rule the varied year,
Sullen and sad."

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