

VI. Part of a Letter from Mr. Robert Taylor,  
Apothecary at Hitchin in Hertfordshire, to  
Hans Sloan, giving Account of a great Hail-  
storm there, May 4th, 1697.

S I R,

ON *Tuesday* the 4th of *May*, 1697. about Nine of the  
Clock in the Morning, it began to Lighten and  
Thunder extreamly, some great Showers intervening ;  
it continued till about two of the Clock in the After-  
noon, when on a sudden a Black Cloud arose S. W. of  
us, the Wind being E. and blew hard ; then fell a  
sharp Shower, with some Hailstones : I sent my Man  
out, and he took up some, which I measured Seven and  
Eight Inches about ; but the extremity of the Storm  
fell about *Offley*, where there was unhappily a young  
Fellow keeping Sheep, who was killed, and one of his  
Eyes stuck out of his Head , his Body was all o-  
ver black with the Bruises ; another Person near-  
er to *Offley* escaped his Life , but much Bruised ;  
there was in the House of Sir *John Spencer* ,  
7000 Quarries of Glafs broke, and there was great  
damage done to all the Neighbouring Houses therea-  
bouts ; the Hail fell in such vast quantities, and so  
great , that it tore up the Ground, split great Oaks  
and other Trees, in great Numbers ; it cut down  
great Fields of Rye, as with a Scyth, and has destroy-  
ed several Hundred Acres of Wheat, Barley, &c. info-  
much, that they Plough it up, and sow it with Oats :  
The Tempest was such when it fell, that in four Poles  
of Land, from the Hills near us, it carried away all  
the Staple of the Land, leaving nothing but Chalk ;

R r r

the Hail broke vast Numbers of Pidgeons Wings, Crows, Rooks and other Birds; the Flood came down, spreading Four or Five Acres of Land, rowling like the Bay of *Biscay*; and which is very strange, all this fell in the compass of one *English* Mile. I was walking in my Garden which is very small, perhaps about Thirty Yards square, and before I could get out, it took me to my knees, and was through my House before I could get in, which I can modestly speak was in the space of a Minute, and went through all like a Sea, carrying all wooden things like Boats on the Water, the greatest part of the Town being under this Misfortune; the surprize was so great, that we had scarce time enough to save our Children and Wives. The bigness of the Hail stones is almost incredible; And truly, were not I a Witness to the vastness of the Numbers and Greatness, I should not have believed, for Number it is impossible, to relate some Hundred thousand Cart-Loads, and I see them four Days after; and if the Beds of Hail had not been broke by Peoples coming, and trampling of Horses, it might have lain till *Michaelmas*. They have been measured from One, to Thirteen and Fourteen Inches certain; some People talk largely of it, Seventeen and Eighteen Inches, but the other is certain Truth: The Figures of them are various, some Oval, others round, others picked, some flat, we were not so curious to weigh them. The Damage about us and in our Town, is near 4000 *l sterl*. This is the most exact Account that I can give of this most prodigious Storm, *the like I believe was never read nor heard of.*