

The Copy of a Letter from Somersetshire, concerning a Strange Frost, which hath lately done much hurt about Bristol ; together with some useful hints suggested upon that occasion.

S I R,

I Have my self observed, and heard from others, that much violent Rain fell in many places of *England* this last Summer and Autumn 1672. And 'tis manifest, that such vehement showers do wash and carry away the Soil and richest Compost out of the common fields into the Rivers, and by them into the Ocean : Which is the cause of barrenness and scarcity of Corn, and sometimes of a great mortality of Men and Cattle in the following years ; as I could make appear by many sad instances.

For a remedy against Famine, or to prevent it, some good Men, with much zeal for the publick welfare, have earnestly solicited *The Plantation of Orchards and Groves* ; having received it from a Tradition pretending to long Observation and frequent Experience, that in those years, in which Corn most fails, fruit, mast, chesnuts, wall-nuts, and such relief from our Trees, do most abound. But there is no sufficient defence against Divine Judgments, till we return to our duty. That Orchards and Groves will not do it, you may see by the *Narrative following* ;

The Freezing rain, which fell here the ninth, tenth, or eleventh of *December* last, (for I cannot confine the time exactly) hath made such a destruction of Trees in all the Villages and High ways from *Bristol* toward *Wells* and towards *Shepton-Mallet*, and towards *Bath* and *Bruton*, and in other places of the West, that both for the Manner and Matter it may seem incredible ; and is more strange than I have found in any English Chronicle. You will have the proof and manner and best measure of it in a Transcript, which I shall here give you from a very worthy person of unquestionable credit, as you or others of your near acquaintance do well know,

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"The late prodigious Frost (saith he) hath much disabled
 "many old Orchards exposed to the North-East. Had it con-
 "cluded with some gusts of Wind, it might have been of sad im-
 "portance: I weighed the Sprigg of an Ash-tree of just three
 "quarters of a pound, which was brought to my Table; the Ice
 "on it weighed sixteen pounds, besides what was melted off
 "by the hands of them that brought it. A very small bent at
 "the same time was produced, which had an Icicle, encompassing
 "it, of five inches round by measure: Yet all this while, when
 "Trees and hedges were laden with Ice, there was no Ice to be
 "seen on our Rivers, nor so much as on our standing Pools. Now
 "we are seriously concerned for Replanting. Dated ^{Dec: 30^o}
 " 72.

Sir, The like, or worle and more strange complaints, I
 received from several other places, and from Eye-Witnes-
 ses of credit. Some Travailers were almost lost by the cold-
 ness of the freezing air, and freezing rain. All the Trees,
 young and old, on the high-way from *Bristol* to *Shepton*, were
 so torn and thrown down on both sides the ways, that
 they were unpassable. By the like obstructions the Carri-
 ers of *Bruton* were forc't to return back. Some were af-
 frighted with the noise in the Air, till they discerned that
 it was the clatter of Icy boughs dashed one against another
 by the wind. Some told me, that riding on the snowy
 Downs, they saw this freezing rain fall upon the snow, and
 immediately freeze to Ice, without sinking at all into the
 snow; so that the snow was covered with Ice all along, and
 had been dangerous, if the Ice had been strong enough to
 bear them. Others were on their Journey when the Ice
 was able to bear them in some places, and they were in
 great distress.

I said, I could not punctually define the time when this
 freezing rain was most violent and most apparent. Dec. 8.
 much snow fell here; the ninth, much rain fell here; and
 all the snow passed away, not leaving an Icicle amongst
 us. The tenth day, we had suddain fits of cold and relax-
 ing warmth. On Wednesday (Dec. 11.) I saw a young
 man, who returning home from a Journey of five miles,

and coming into a warm room, cryed out of extream torments in all parts of his body. He affirmed, that the Air, and the Winds (which were then somewhat high) were so unsufferably cold, that he was in utter despair of coming home alive; yet all that day nothing but moist dew fell under our feet. If we say, the Earth did send forth warm steams to keep this freezing rain dissolved on her Surface; whence shall we say, the Air and Rain and Winds got these freezing Icicles, which oppressed men and plants? When the candid Frosts do cover our Fruit-trees perfectly white (as I have oft-times seen it hold for some weeks together) it is so far from doing hurt to the Trees, that we have it in a proverb for a good sign of abundance of fruit in the ensuing year: But for this Freezing rain, as soon as it touched any bough, settled into Ice, and by multiplying and enlarging the Icicles (especially where it could lay hold on Moss or other asperities of the Tree) it broke all down with the weight.

As soon as these Frosts were over, we had glowing heats, which caused a general complaint amongst us of excessive sweating, by night and day. The bushes and many flowers in the Garden appeared in such forwardness, as if it were in *April* or *May*. I saw young Coleworts growing; roots and leaves; on the top, leaves of an older Colwort. Not far from my abode, an Apple-tree blossomed before Christmas: This I do not mention for extraordinary; but I think, 'tis more than ordinary, that before New-years-tide this Apple-tree bore Apples perfectly knitted, and as big as ones fingers end. I had some of these apples brought to me, which I intended to send you; but they so withered in my pocket, that they have little resemblance of what they were a fortnight since, when they were green and plump.

It were to be wished, that some ingenious men would (instead of the conjectures of weather to come) give a faithful and judicious accompt of the weather, and other remarkable accidents and phænomena, as they fell out on
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the same day of the Month of the year foregoing. Hence we might in time examine upon some grounds, How far the Positions of Planets, or other symptoms or concomitants, are Indicative of Weathers. Probably we may have forewarnings of Deaths or Famines, Epidemical diseases, &c. and by their causes be instructed for remedies or prevention. Certainly, by this method we may learn more in few years than at random in all the days of our short lives. And, if such Calenders might be had from other forreign and remote parts, as from *Dantzick*, *Tangier*, *New England*, *Bermudos*, *Barbados*, *Jamaica*, &c; we should make a closer chase to investigate the cause of Heat and Cold, coasting Rain and coasting Winds. And this diligence would be profitable if observed from several parts of England, Sea-coasts, Midland, &c.

Neither would it less oblige posterity, if he, who writes the *London-Calendar*, would record at the end of every month the highest and lowest price of Wheat, Rye, Barley, Pease, Beans, Oats, as they are sold in some chief Market in *London*; and abstract in one page the *weekly Bills* of Births, Burials, of Males and Females.

And the like Calenders are to be wisht from *Paris*, *Rome*, *Venice*, *Vienna*, *Madrid*, since Major *Grant* hath drawn us good Instructions, what manifold uses may be made from such informations, &c.

It cannot be expected, that we should soon have it registred under every month, the *Quantity and Weight of Rain that falls every month*, or in great showers, or long lasting rain. And though this would seem a dull work; yet it would signify something to some purposes.

In old Histories I find, that Earthquakes, Inundations, Droughts, Famine, Pestilences, were each of them (in their several seasons, and sometimes one close on the heels of the other,) almost universal over the known world; sometimes raging from place to place several years together. As the Learned *Meade* relateth of a Pestilence, which in the days of *Gallus* and *Volusianus* began in *Aethiopia*, and for

three years wasted all the Roman Provinces. *Zonaras* is his Author; and *Lipsius* his abettor in these words; *Nec alia unquam major lues mihi lecta, spatio temporum, sive terrarum.* As plagues and famine, so storms and tempests, and (as far as I could collect) this frost, and some winds, (more in some places than in other) did run from one place, and break out in another at differing times and by short journeys, about ten miles at a time. Thunder is not often heard above twenty miles off; except when it rolls about in a large compass, or the sound is assisted by the conveyance of Woods, Forests, Rivers or Channels. Hence Correspondence will be necessary to perfect these Registers.

If such a *Kalendar* as is here proposed, were happily begun, the leading example would draw on and grow to afford us better Light, than hath been hitherto assured by all the remains of Astrology. And they may make acquaintance with others, who have a genius, employment and opportunities fit to bear the trouble of drawing the Tables of Weather and remarkable fatalities. Forewarnings may prepare us to consult for Preventions or Remedies. In the year 1629 or 1630 there was a Dearth in *England*: And much talk there was then, that in *London* they had a way to knead and ferment boyled Turneps with a small quantity of meal; and that it made better Bread for whiteness, pleasantness, lasting and wholesomeness, than is made of the finest flower of wheat. Turneps, Rapes, Carrets, Parsneps, Potadoes, and other Roots lye safe under ground from scorching heat, and are said to thrive best in the greatest rain. *Potadoes* were a relief to *Ireland* in their last famine. They yield meat and drink. But after all our diligence and contrivances, our only safeguard is, to serve him, that is the Supreme Governor and Disposer of all.

Jan. 12. 16²²/₇₃.

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