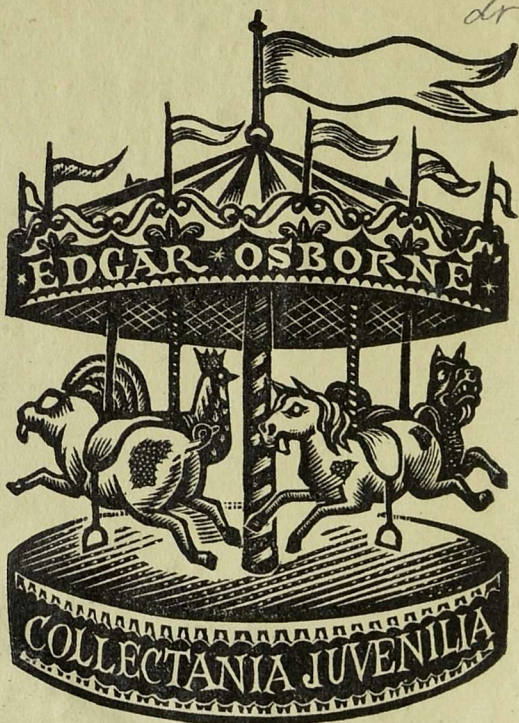
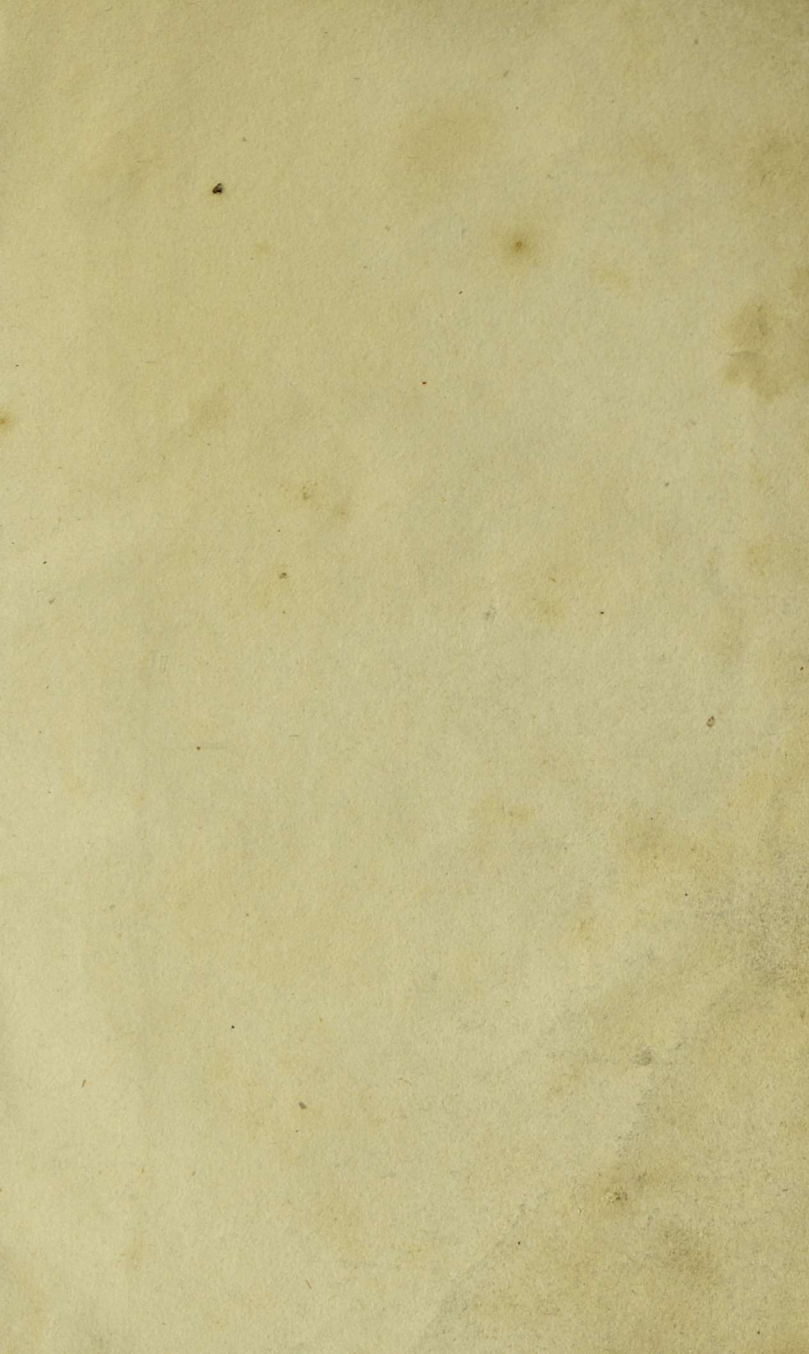


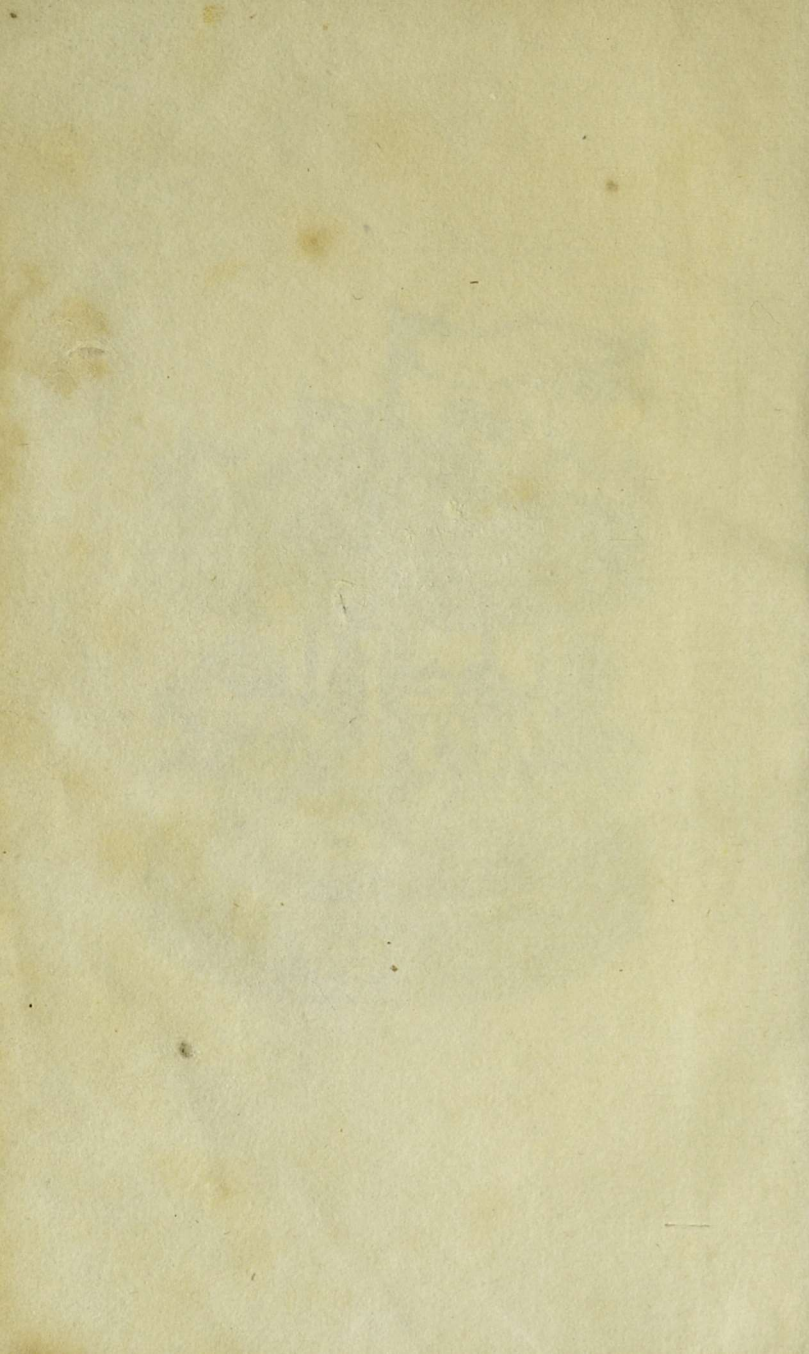




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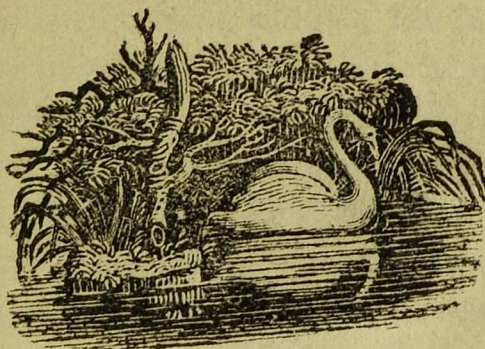


MAY-DAY SPORTS.

THE
SEASONS DISPLAYED:

OR,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE
VARIOUS PRODUCTIONS
OF
NATURE.

*Intended to instruct and delight the Under-
standing of Youth.*



COVENTRY:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY R. PRATT.

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THE SEASONS.

JANUARY.

THE civilized nations in general agree to begin reckoning the new year from the first of January. Yet some have thought it best to begin the year in Spring, when the face of Nature is really *renewed*. It has however at length been determined to date the commencement of the year, as at present, within a few days after the *winter-solstice*, or shortest day. This always takes place on the twenty-first of December, and from that time, the days are gradually lengthened, till the middle of Summer.

January is the coldest month; and in England we seldom have much frost or snow before it. The weather is commonly either clear dry frost, or fog and snow, with rain now and then intermixed.

Nothing can be more wonderful than the effects of frost. To see the running stream stop-

ped in its course; the lake that was curled by every breeze converted into a firm plain; the moist ground dried up and made as hard as a rock; and all this done by an invisible power in the space of a single night; would be infinitely surprizing to one unaccustomed to the sight. These effects are painted in a very lively manner by THOMSON, in his *Seasons*.

An icy gale, oft shifting o'er the pool
Breathes a blue film, and in its mid career
Arrests the bick'ring storm.
Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects
A double noise; while at his evening watch,
The village-dog deters the nightly thief;
The heifer lows; the distant water-fall
Swells in the breeze; and with the hasty tread
Of traveller the hollow-sounding plain
Shakes from afar.

It freezes on,
Till Morn, late rising o'er the drooping world,
Lifts her pale eye, unjoyous. Then appears
The various labour of the silent Night:
Prone from the dripping eave, and dumb cascade,
Whose idle torrents only seem to roar;

The pendant icicle, the frost-work fair,
Where transient hues and fancy'd figures rise ;
Wide-spouted o'er the hill, the frozen brook,
A livid tract, cold gleaming on the morn.

Water, when frozen, is *expanded*, that is, takes up more room than before ; hence ice is lighter than water, and swims upon it. From this cause, if a bottle full of water, hard-corked, be set to freeze, the bottle will be broken for the want of room for the expansion of the frozen water. Water-pipes often burst from the same cause, and hoops fly off from barrels ; nay, even a gun-barrel, or a cannon, filled with water, and screwed up at the muzzle, have been burst in an intense frost.

The same property produces a very beneficial effect to the husbandman ; for the hard clods of the ploughed fields are loosened and broken to pieces by the swelling of the water within them, when frozen. Hence the earth is crumbled, and prepared for receiving the seed in Spring.

Snow is the water of clouds frozen. It is very useful by covering the plants, and pro-

protecting them from the severity of the frost; for, at a certain depth under the snow, the cold always continues the same. It is also thought to enrich the ground, and serve as a sort of manure; but some suppose it not at all different from rain in this respect. The beauty of a country all clothed in new fallen snow is very striking.

The cherished fields
Put on their winter-robe of purest white.
'Tis brightness all; save where the new snow
 melts
Along the mazy current. Low the woods
Bow their hoar head; and ere the languid Sun,
Faint from the west, emits his ev'ning ray,
Earth's universal face, deep hid and chill,
Is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide
The works of man. THOMSON.

Hail-stones are drops of rain suddenly congealed into a hard mass, so as to preserve their figure. These often fall in warmer seasons of the year, as even then, the upper regions of the atmosphere are very cold.

Hoar-frost is a dew or mist frozen. It adheres to every object on which it falls, and produces figures of incomparable beauty and elegance. Every twig and blade of grass is beset by it with innumerable glittering pearly drops, or silvery plumage, beyond the skill of any artist to imitate.

The inclemency of the season is shown by its effects on animals, particularly on the numerous tribes of birds. As the cold advances, they collect in flocks, quit their retreats, and rendered bold by want, approach the habitations of man. Larks and other small birds shelter themselves in the warm stubble. Sparrows, yellow-hammers, and chaffinches, crowd into the farm-yards, and attend the barn-doors, to pick their scanty fare from the chaff and straw. The red breast ventures into the house, "and pays to trusted man his annual visit."

Fieldfares and thrushes in large flocks descend from the tops of trees, and frequent the warm manured fields in the neighbourhood of towns. Snipes, woodcocks, wild-ducks, and other water fowl, are forced from the frozen marshes, and



obliged to seek their food about the rapid currents of streams which are yet unfrozen. As the cold grows more intense, various kinds of sea fowl, quit the bleak open shores, and come up the rivers, where they offer an unusual prey to the fowler.

The wild quadrupeds too are driven from their accustomed remote haunts. Hares enter the gardens to browse on the cultivated vegetables; and leaving their tracks in snow, are frequently hunted down, or caught in snares. The hen roosts are pillaged by foxes, polecats, and other small beasts of prey which our country breeds; but we are happily unacquainted with the ravenous troops of wolves, bears, and other fierce

creatures, which, urged by famine at this season, often terrify the villages in the mountainous and woody regions on the continent.

The domestic cattle now require all the care and protection of the farmer.

Now, shepherds, to you helpless charge be kind;
Baffle the raging year, and fill their pens
With food at will; lodge them below the storm,
And watch them strict; for, from the bellowing
east,

In this dire season, oft the whirlwind's wing
Sweeps up the burthen of whole wint'ry plains,
At one wide waft, and o'er the hapless flocks,
Hid in the hollow of two neighbouring hills,
The billowy tempest whelms; till upward urg'd,
The valley to a shining mountain swells,
Tipt with a wreath high curling in the sky.

THOMSON.

The plants at this season are provided by Nature with a kind of winter-quarters, which secure them from the effects of cold. Those called *herbaceous*, which die down to the root every Autumn, are now safely concealed under ground,

preparing their new shoots to burst forth, when the earth is softened by Spring. Shrubs and trees, which are exposed to the open air, have all their soft and tender parts closely wrapt up in buds, which by their firmness resist all the force of frost. If one of these buds be carefully opened, it is found to consist of young leaves rolled together, within which are hidden all the blossoms in miniature, which are afterwards to adorn the Spring. Some of these are much forwarder than others. The leaves of the woodbine appear just ready to expand by the end of the month; the flowers on the mezereon and snow-drop seem on the point of blowing; and the catkin, or male flower-bunch of the hazel, begins to unfold.

During the severity of the frost, little work can be done out of doors by the husbandman. As soon as it sets in, he takes the opportunity of the hardness of the ground, to draw manure to his fields. He lops and cuts timber, and mends thorn-hedges. When the roads become smooth from the frozen snow, he takes his team and carries hay and corn to market, or brings coals

for himself and neighbours. The barn resounds with the flail, by the use of which the labourer is enabled to defy the cold weather.

In towns the poor are pinched for fuel and food, and charity is peculiarly called for at this comfortless time of the year. Many trades are at a stand during the severity of the frost. Rivers and canals being frozen up, watermen and bargemen are without employment. The harbours in this island, however, are never locked up by the ice, as they are for many months in the northern parts of Europe.

The amusements of sliding, skating, and other pastimes on the ice, give life to this dreary season; but our frosts are not continued and steady enough, to afford us such a share of these diversions as some other nations enjoy.

Where the Rhine

Branch'd out in many a long canal extends,
From every province swarming, void of care,
Batavia rushes forth; and as they sweep,
On sounding skates, a thousand different ways,
In circling poise, swift as the winds along.

B

The *then* gay land is madden'd all to joy.
Nor less the northern courts, wide o'er the snow,
Pour a new pomp. Eager, on rapid sleds
Their vig'rous youth, in bold contention, wheel
The long resounding course. Mean time, to raise
The manly strife, with highly blooming charms,
Flush'd by the season, Scandinavia's dames,
Or Russia's buxom daughters, glow around.

THOMSON.

FEBRUARY.

THE days are now sensibly lengthened; and the sun has power enough gradually to melt away the snow and ice. Sometimes, a sudden thaw comes on with a south wind and rain, which all at once dissolves the snow. Torrents of water then descend from the hills; every little brook and rill is swelled to a large stream; and the ice is swept away with great violence from the rivers.

The frost, however, returns for a time; the fresh snow falls, often in great quantities; and

thus the weather alternately changes during most part of this month.

Various signs of returning Spring occur at different times in February. The woodlark, one of the earliest and sweetest songsters, often begins his note at the very entrance of the month. Not long after rooks begin to pair, and geese to lay. The thrush and chaffinch then add to the music of the groves. Near the close of the month, partridges begin to couple, and repair the ravages committed on this devoted species during the Autumn and Winter.

Moles go to work in throwing up their hillocks as soon as the earth is softened. Under some of the largest, a little below the surface of the earth, they make their nests of moss, in which four or five young are found at a time. These animals live on worms, insects, and the roots of plants. They do much mischief in gardens, by loosening and devouring flower roots; but in the fields they seem to do no other damage, than rendering the surface of the ground unequal by their hillocks, which obstruct the scythe in mowing.



Many plants emerge from under ground in February; and the greenhouse begins to take the attention of the florist; but few flowers as yet adorn the fields or gardens. Snowdrops generally are fully opened at the beginning of the month, often peeping out from the midst of the snow.

Already now the snow-drop dares appear,
 The first pale blossom of th' unripen'd year:
 As Flora's breath, by some transforming power,
 Had chang'd an icicle into a flow'r:
 Its name and hue the scentless plant retains,
 And Winter lingers in its icy veins.

MRS. BARBAULD.

The alder tree discloses its flower-buds. The catkins of the hazel become very conspicuous in the hedges. Young leaves are budding on the gooseberries and currants about the end of the month.

The farmer is impatient to begin his work in the fields as soon as the ground is sufficiently thawed. He ploughs up his fallows; sows beans and peas, rye and spring-wheat; dresses and repairs hedges; lops trees, and plants those kinds which love a wet soil, as poplars and willows.

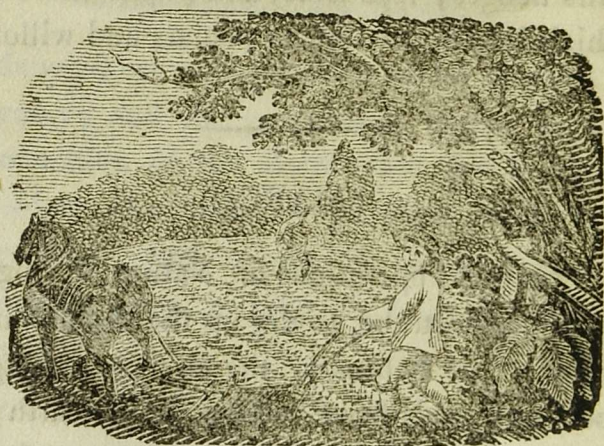
MARCH.

THE great operations of Nature during this month seem to be, to dry up the superabundant moisture of February, thereby preventing the roots and seeds from rotting in the earth; and gradually to bring forward the process of evolution in the swelling buds, whilst, at the same time, by the wholesome severity of chilling blasts, they are kept from a premature disclosure, which would expose their tender contents

to injury, from the yet unsettled season. This effect is beautifully touched upon in a simile of SHAKESPEAR'S—

And like the tyrannous breathings of the north,
Checks all our buds from blowing.

This seeming tyranny, however, is to be regarded as the most useful discipline; and those years generally prove most fruitful, in which the pleasing appearances of Spring are the latest.



As soon as a few dry days have made the land fit for working, the farmer goes to the plough; and, if the fair weather continues, proceeds to sowing oats and barley; though this business is

seldom finished till the next month. The importance of a dry season for getting the seed early and favourably into the ground is expressed in the old proverb,

A bushel of March dust is worth a king's ransom.

The mellow note of the thristle, who sings perched on the naked bough of some lofty tree, is heard from the beginning of the month: at the same time, the ring-dove cooes in the woods. The rookery is now all in motion with the pleasing labour of building and repairing nests; and highly amusing it is to observe the tricks and artifices of the thievish tribe, some to defend, and others to plunder the materials of their new habitations. These birds are accused of doing much injury to the farmer, by plucking up the young corn and other springing vegetables; but some think this mischief fully repaid by their diligence in picking up the grubs of various insects, which if suffered to grow to maturity, would occasion much greater damage. For this purpose, they are frequently seen following the plough, or settling in flocks on newly turned up lands.

Some birds, which took refuge in our temperate climate from the rigour of the northern winters, now begin to leave us, and return to the countries where they were bred. The red-wing thrush, fieldfare, and woodcock, are of this kind; and they retire to spend their summer in Norway, Sweden, and other parts of the north.

Frogs, which during winter lay in a torpid state at the bottoms of ponds or ditches, are enlivened by the warmth of Spring, and early in this month rise to the surface of the water in vast numbers. They are at first very timorous, and dive to the bottom with great quickness as one approaches; but in the coupling season they become bolder, and make themselves heard to a great distance by their croaking.

But nothing in the animal-creation is a more pleasing spectacle, than the sporting of the young lambs, most of which are yeaned this month, and are trusted abroad when the weather is tolerably mild. DYER in his poem of *The Fleece*, gives a very natural and beautiful description of this circumstance:



Spread around thy tend'rest diligence
 In flow'ry Spring-time, when the new dropt lamb,
 Tott'ring with weakness by its mother's side,
 Feels the fresh world about him, and each thorn,
 Hillock, or furrow, trips his feeble feet :
 Oh ! guard his meek sweet innocence from all
 Th' innum'rous ills that rush around his life !
 Mark the quick kite, with beak and talons prone,
 Circling the skies to snatch him from the plain !
 Observe the lurking crows ! beware the brake,
 There the sly fox the careless minute waits !
 Nor trust thy neighbour's dog, nor earth, nor sky :
 Thy bosom to a thousand cares divide !
 Eurus oft slings his hail ; the tardy fields

Pay not their promis'd food ; and oft the dam
O'er her weak twins with empty udder mourns,
Or fails to guard, when the bold bird of prey
Alights, and hops in many turns around,
And tires her, also turning : to her aid
Be nimble, and the weakest, in thine arms,
Gently convey to the warm cote : and oft,
Between the lark's note, and the nightingale's,
His hungry bleating still with tepid milk :
In this soft office, may thy children join,
And charitable habits learn in sport :
Nor yield him to himself, ere vernal airs
Sprinkle thy little croft with daisy flowers.

Another most agreeable token of the arrival of Spring is, that the bees begin to venture out of their hives about the middle of this month. As their food is the honey-like juice found in the tubes of flowers, their coming abroad is a certain sign that flowers are now to be met with. no creature seems possessed of a greater power of foreseeing the weather ; so that their appearance in the morning may be reckoned a sure token of a fine day.

The gardens are now rendered gay by the

crocus's, which adorn the borders with a rich mixture of the brightest yellow and purple. The little shrubs of mezereon are in their beauty. The fields look green with the springing grass, but few wild flowers as yet appear to decorate the ground: daisies, however, begin to be sprinkled over the dry pastures; and the moist banks of ditches are enlivened with the glossy star-like yellow flowers of pile-wort. Towards the end of the month, primroses peep out beneath the hedges; and the most delightfully fragrant of all flowers, the violet, discovers itself by the perfume it imparts to the surrounding air, before the eye has perceived it in its lowly bed.

There are several kinds of violets; but the fragrant (both blue and white) is the earliest, thence called the *March violet*. To these flowers SHAKESPEARE adds the daffodil,

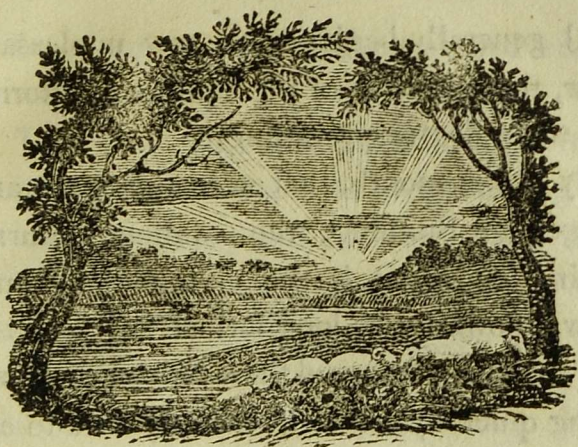
Which comes before the swallow dares, and takes
The winds of March with beauty.

In the gardens, the peach and nectarine, the almond, the cherry, and apricot trees, come into

full bud during this month. The gardeners find plenty of employment in pruning trees, digging and manuring beds, and sowing a great variety of seeds, both for the flower and kitchen garden.

In the latter part of this month, the *equinox* happens, when day and night are of an equal length all over the globe; or rather, when the sun is an equal time above and below the horizon: for, the morning and evening twilight make apparent day considerably longer than night. This takes place again in September. The first is called the *vernal*, the latter the *autumnal* equinox. At these times, storms and tempests are particularly frequent, whence they have always been the terror of mariners. March winds are boisterous and vehement to a proverb.





APRIL.

APRIL weather is become a proverbial expression for a mixture of the bright and gloomy. The pleasantness of the sun-shiny days, with the delightful view of fresh greens and newly opened flowers, is unequalled; but they are frequently overcast with clouds, and chilled with rough wintry blasts.

This month gives the most perfect image of Spring; for, its vicissitudes of warm gleams of sunshine, and gentle showers, have the most powerful effects in hastening the universal springing of the vegetable tribes; whence the season derives its appellation.

April generally begins with raw unpleasant weather, the influence of the equinoctial storms still in some degree prevailing.

Early in the month, that welcome guest and harbinger of Summer, the swallow, returns. The kind first seen is the chimney or house swallow, known by its long forked tail and red breast. At first, here and there only one appears glancing quick by us, as if scarcely able to endure the cold.

The swallow, for a moment seen,
Skims in haste, the village green.

But, in a few days, their number is much increased, and they sport with seeming pleasure in the warm sunshine.

And see, my Delia, see o'er yonder stream,
Where on the sunny bank the lambkins play;
Alike attracted to th' enlivening gleam,
The stranger swallows take their wonted way.
JAGO.

As these birds live on insects, their appearance is a certain proof that some of this minute

tribe of animals are now got abroad from their winter retreats.

The birds are now busied in pairing and building their nests. As their singing is the voice of courtship and conjugal love, the concerts of the groves begin to fill all with their various melody. The nightingale, that most accomplished and enchanting of songsters, is heard soon after the arrival of the swallow. He sings by day as well as by night; but in the day-time his voice is drowned in the multitude of performers; in the evening it is heard alone.

Another of the most striking events of this month is, the renewal of the cuckoo's note, which is generally heard about the middle of April. This is so remarkable a circumstance, that it has commanded attention in all countries; and several rustic sayings, and the names of several plants which flower at this time, are derived from it.

Soon as the daisy decks the green,
Thy certain voice we hear;
Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
Or mark the rolling year?

Delightful visitant ! with thee
I hail the time of flow'rs,
When heav'n is fill'd with music sweet
Of birds among the bow'rs. LOGAN.

The cuckoo's arrival is regularly preceeded some days by that of the wryneck, a small bird, singular in its attitudes and plumage, and living upon insects which harbour in the bark of trees, which it extracts by means of its long tongue, furnished with a sharp bony tip. The wryneck has also a peculiar note, or cry, easily distinguished by those who have once heard it.

Other birds which are seen amongst us only in the warmer months, as the redstart, white-throat, and yellow wagtail appear in April.

The fishes are now inspired by the same enlivening influence which acts upon the rest of animated Nature: and, in consequence, again offer themselves as a prey to the art of the angler, who returns to his usual haunt.

Beneath a willow long forsook,
The fisher seeks his custom'd nook ;
And, bursting through the crackling sedge
That crowns the current's cavern'd edge,

He startles from the bord'ring wood
The bashful wild-duck's early brood

WARTON.

It is, however, an anxious time for the possessor, as the fairest prospect of a plentiful increase is so often blighted.

The apricots and peaches lead the way in blossoming, and are followed by the cherry and plum. The black-thorn or sloe, (which is a species of plum), also enlivens the hedges with its flowers in this month. Those of the lowlier plants which now most strike the eye are, the primrose and wood-sorrel under hedges; the wood anemone in dry woods and thickets; the wood-crowfoot and marsh-marigold in wet marshy places; and the lady-smock, or cuckoo-flower (as some call it), in meadows.



MAY.

THIS has ever been the favorite month of the year in poetical description; but the praises, so lavishly bestowed upon it, took their rise from climates more southern than ours. In such, it really unites all the soft beauties of Spring with the radiance of Summer; and has warmth enough to cheer and invigorate, without overpowering. With us, especially since we have reckoned by the new style, great part of this month is yet too chill for a perfect enjoyment of the charms of Nature; and frequent injury is done to the flowers and young fruits during its course, by blights and blsating winds. May-day, though still observed as a rural festival, has often very little pleasure to bestow but that arising from the name.

This month, the earth is covered with the freshest green of the grass and young corn, and adorned with numerous flowers opening on every side. The trees put on all their verdure; the hedges are rich in fragrance from the snowy

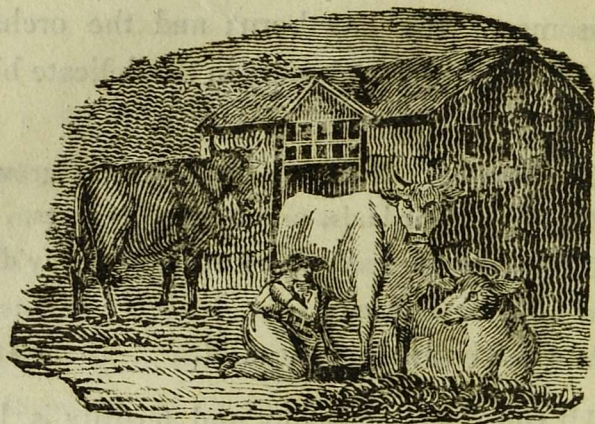
blossoms of the hawthorn; and the orchards display their highest beauty in the delicate blush of the apple-blossoms.

The hawthorn whitens; and the juicy groves
Put forth their buds, unfolding by degrees,
Till the whole leafy forest stands display'd
In full luxuriance; - - - -
And the birds sing conceal'd. THOMSON.

All this scene of beauty and fertility is, however, sometimes dreadfully ravaged by the blights which peculiarly occur in this month. The mischief seems to be done chiefly by innumerable swarms of very small insects which are brought by the north-east winds.

For oft engender'd by the hazy north,
Myriads on myriads, insect armies warp
Keen in the poison'd breeze; and wasteful eat,
Through buds and bark into the blacken'd core
Their eager way. THOMSON.

A cold and windy May is, however, accounted favourable to the corn; which, if brought forward by early warm weather, is apt to run into stalk, while its ears remain thin and light.



The first of May is the general time for turning out cattle into the pastures, though frequently very bare of grass. The milk soon becomes more copious, and of finer quality, from the juices in the young grass; and it is in this month that the making of cheese is usually begun in the dairies.

The gardens now yield an agreeable, though immature, product, in the young gooseberries and currants, which are highly acceptable to our tables, now almost exhausted of their store of preserved fruits.

The leafing of trees is commonly completed in this month. It begins with the aquatic kinds,

such as willow, poplar, and alder; and ends with the oak, beech, and ash. These are sometimes very thin of foliage even at the close of May.

Among the numerous wild flowers, none attracts more notice than the cowslip,

Whose bashful flowers,
Declining, hide their beauty from the Sun,
Nor give their spotted bosoms to the gaze
Of hasty passenger.

The whole surface of meadows is often covered with the yellow crow-foot. These flowers are also called butter-cups, and are supposed by some to give the butter its rich yellow tinge at this season; but falsely, as the cows will not touch it, on account of its biting quality.

Birds hatch and rear their young principally during this month. The patience and assiduity of the female, during the task of sitting, is admirable; as well as the conjugal affection of the male, who sings to his mate, and often supplies her place; and nothing can exceed the paternal tenderness of both, when the young are brought to light.

Towards the end of May, the bee-hives send forth their earlier swarms. These colonies consist of the young progeny, now grown too numerous to remain in their parent habitation, and sufficiently strong and vigorous to provide for themselves. One queen-bee is necessary to form each colony; and wherever she flies, they follow. Nature directs them to march in a body in quest of a new settlement, which, if left to their choice, would generally be some hollow trunk of a tree: but man, who converts the labours and instincts of so many animals to his own use, provides them with a more secure dwelling, and repays himself with their honey.

The husbandman now finishes his sowing, and looks forward with anxious hope to the reward of his industry.

Be gracious, Heaven! for now laborious man
Has done his part. Ye fostering breezes, blow!
Ye softening dews, ye tender showers, descend!
And temper all, thou world-reviving Sun,
Into the perfect year.

THOMSON.

JUNE.

JUNE is really, the most lovely month of the year. Summer is commenced, and warm weather thoroughly established; yet the heats rarely rise to excess, or interrupt the enjoyment of those pleasures which the scenes of Nature now afford. The trees are in their fullest dress; and a profusion of the gayest flowers is every where scattered around, which put on all their beauty just before they are cut down by the scythe, or withered by the heat.

Soft copious showers are extremely welcome towards the beginning of this month, to forward the growth of the herbage. Such an one is thus described by THOMSON.

Gradual sinks the breeze

Into a perfect calm;

At last,

The clouds consign their treasures to the fields;
And softly shaking on the dimpled pool
Prelusive drops, let all their moisture flow,
In large effusion, o'er the freshen'd world.

The stealing show'r is scarce to patter heard,
By such as wander through the forest walks,
Beneath th' umbrageous multitudes of leaves.
But who can hold the shade, while Heaven descends
In universal bounty, shedding herbs,
And fruits, and flow'rs, on Nature's ample lap?



One of the earliest rural employments of this month is the shearing of sheep; a business of much importance in various parts of the kingdom, where wool is one of the most valuable products. England has for many ages been famous for its breeds of sheep, which yield wool of various qualities, suited to different branches

of the woollen manufactory. The downs of Dorsetshire, and other southern and western counties, feed sheep, whose fine short fleeces are employed in making the best broad cloths. The coarser wool of Yorkshire, and the northern counties, is used in the narrow cloths. The large Leicestershire and Lincolnshire sheep are clothed with long thick flakes, proper for the hosier's use; and every other kind is valuable for some particular purpose.

The season for sheep-shearing commences as soon as the warm weather is so far settled, that the sheep may without danger lay aside great part of their clothing: the following tokens mark out the time:

If humble daisies yield
To yellow crowfoot and luxuriant grass;
Gay shearing-time approaches.

Before shearing, the sheep undergo the operation of washing, in order to free the wool from the foulness it has contracted.

Upon the brim
Of a clear river gently drive the flock,

And plunge them one by one into the flood ;
Plung'd in the flood, not long the struggler sinks,
With his white flakes, that glisten through the
tide ;

The sturdy rustic, in the middle wave,
Awaits to see him rising ; one arm bears
His lifted head above the limpid stream,
While the full clammy fleece the other laves
Around, laborious, with repeated toil ;
And then resigns him to the sunny bank,
Where bleating loud, he shakes his dripping
locks.

DYER.

The shearing itself is conducted with a degree of ceremony and rural dignity, and is a kind of festival, as well as a piece of labour.

A profusion of fragrance now arises from the fields of clover in flower. Of this plant there are the varieties of white and purple. The latter is sometimes called honey-suckle, from the quantity of sweet juice contained in the tube of the flower, whence the bees extract much of their honey.

A still more delicious odour proceeds from the beans in blossom :

Long let us walk

Where the breeze blows from yon extended field
Of blossom'd beans. Arabia cannot boast
A fuller gale of joy, than, lib'ral, thence
Breathe through the sense, and takes the ravish'd
soul.

In the hedges, the place of the hawthorn is supplied by the flowers of the hip, or dog-rose, the different hues of which, from a light blush to a deep crimson, form a most elegant variety of colour. Some time after, the woodbine or honey-suckle begins to blow; and this, united with the rose, gives our hedges their highest beauty and fragrance.

The several kind of corn come into ear and flower during this month; as do likewise numerous species of grass, which, indeed, are all so many lesser kinds of corn; or, rather, corn is only a larger sort of grass.

The larger kinds, which are usually termed *corn*, form the chief articles of food of all the civilized nations of the world. In Europe, the principal kinds of corn are wheat, rye, barley, and oats.

In Asia, rice is most cultivated. In Africa, and the West Indies, maize or Indian corn.

The smaller kinds, called *grasses*, are most valuable for their leaves and stalks, or herbage, which make the principal food of all domestic cattle. This, cut down and dried, is *hay*, the winter provision of cattle in all the temperate and northern climates. The latter part of June is the beginning of hay-harvest for the southern and middle parts of the kingdom. The fragrance of new mown hay, the gaiety of all surrounding objects, and the genial warmth of the weather, all conspire to render it a season of pleasure and delight to the beholder.

On the twenty-first of June happens the *summer solstice*, or longest day. At this time, in the most northern parts of the island, there is scarcely any night, the twilight continuing almost from the setting to the rising of the sun; so that it is light enough at midnight to see to read. This season is also properly called *Midsummer*. The principal season for taking that delicate fish, the mackerel, is in this month. The cuckoo's note ceases about this time.

SUMMER.



Deep to the root
Of vegetation parch'd, the cleaving fields
And slipp'ry lawn an arid hue disclose ;
Echo no more returns the cheerful sound
Of sharp'ning scythe ; the mower, sinking, heap
O'er him the humid hay, with flow'rs perfum'd.

JULY.

As January is the coldest, July is the hottest month of the year. The direct influence of the sun, indeed, is continually diminishing after the summer solstice ; but the earth and air have been so thoroughly heated, that the warmth which they retain more than compensates, for a time, the diminution of the solar rays. The effects of this weather upon the face of Nature soon become manifest. All the flowers of the former months soon loose their beauty, shrivel, and fall ; at the same time their leaves and stalks lose their verdure, and the whole plant hastens to decay.

The lily is one of the principal ornaments of gardens in this month ; and with its delicate white flowers gives an agreeable sensation of coolness to the eye.

The animal-creation seem oppressed with languor during this hot season, and either seek the recesses of woods, or resort to pools and streams, to cool their bodies, or quench their thirst.

On the grassy bank,
Some ruminating lie ; while others stand
Half in the flood, and, often bending, sip
The circling surface. In the middle droops
The strong laborious ox, of honest front,
Which incompas'd he shakes ; and from his sides
The troublous insects lashes with his tail,
Returning still. THOMSON.

The insect tribe, however, are peculiarly active and vigorous in the hottest weather. These minute creatures are for the most part annual, being hatched in the Spring, and dying at the approach of Winter: they have therefore no time to lose in indolence, but must make the most of their short existence ; especially as their most perfect state continues only during a part of their lives. All insects undergo three changes, in each of which they are transformed to a totally different appearance. From the egg, they first turn into *caterpillars* or *maggots*, when they crawl upon many feet, and are extremely voracious, many kinds of them doing much mischief in the gardens, and sometimes devouring the leaves of the trees, and even the

herbage on the ground. This is their state in the Spring. They next become *chrysalises*, when they resemble an infant closely wrapt in swaddling-clothes, being motionless, taking no nourishment, and, indeed, having no appearance of living creatures. From this state they burst forth into the *perfect insect*, shining in all its colours, furnished with wings, full of activity, and feeding for the most part on thin liquid aliments, such as the honey of flowers, and juices of animals. In this state most of them continue but a short time.

The luxury of cooling shades is now peculiarly grateful ; and, indeed, is scarcely desired in this climate longer than a few weeks at the height of Summer.

Welcome, ye shades ! ye bow'ry thickets, hail !

Ye lofty pines ! ye venerable oaks !

Ye ashes wild, resounding o'er the steep !

Delicious is your shelter to the soul,

As to the hunted hart the sallying spring.

THOMSON.

Bathing, too, is a delightful amusement at this



season; and happy is the swimmer, who alone is able to enjoy the full pleasure of this healthful exercise. The power of habit to improve the natural faculties is in nothing more apparent than in the art of swimming. Man, without practice, is utterly unable to support himself in the water. In these northern countries, the season for bathing being short, few in proportion can swim at all; and to those who have acquired the art, it is a laborious and fatiguing exercise. Whereas, in the tropical countries, where from their very infancy both sexes are continually plunging into the water, they become

a sort of amphibious creatures, swimming and diving with the utmost ease, and for hours together without intermission.

The effects of the great heat upon the human body are agreeably allayed, by the various wholesome fruits which Providence offers at this season for the use of man. Those which are now ripe are of all the most cooling and refreshing; as currants, gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries, and cherries. These are no less salutary and useful, than the richest products of the warmer climates.

The farmer's chief employment in July is, getting home the various products of the earth. It is the principal hay-month in the northern parts of the kingdom, and the work people suffer much fatigue from the excessive heat to which they are exposed.

Flax and hemp are pulled in this month. These plants are cultivated in various parts of Europe, more than in England. The stalks of both are full of tough fibres or strings, which, separated and prepared in a particular manner, become fit for spinning into thread. Of flax,

linen is made, from the finest cambric to the coarsest canvas. Hemp is chiefly used for coarse cloth, such as strong sheeting, and sacking; but it is sometimes wrought to considerable fineness; it is also twisted into ropes and cables.

The excessive heats from this period of the year cause such an evaporation from the surface of the earth and waters, that, after some continuance of dry weather, large heavy clouds are formed, which at length let fall their collected liquor in extremely copious showers, which frequently beat down the full-grown corn, and sometimes deluge the country with sudden floods. Thunder and lightening generally accompany these Summer-storms. Lightening is a collection of electric fire drawn from the heated air and earth, and accumulated in the clouds, which, at length, overcharged, suddenly let go their contents in the form of broad flashes, or fiery darts. These are attracted again by the earth, and often intercepted by buildings, trees, and other elevated objects, which are shattered by the shock. Thunder is the noise occasioned by the explosion, and therefore always follows

the lightening; the sound travelling slower to our ears than the light to our eyes. Just the same thing happens when a gun is fired at a distance. When we hear the thunder, therefore, all danger from that flash of lightening is over; and thunder, though so awful and tremendous to the ear, is of itself entirely harmless.

AUGUST.

IN the beginning of this month the weather is still hot, and usually calm and fair. What remained to be perfected by the powerful influence of the sun, is daily advancing to maturity. The farmer now sees the principal object of his culture, and the chief source of his riches, waiting only for the hand of the gatherer. Of the several kinds of grain, rye and oats are usually the first ripened; but this varies according to the time of sowing; and some of every species may be seen fit for cutting at the same time.



Every fair day is now of great importance ; since, when the corn is once ripe, it is liable to continual damage while standing, either from the shedding of the seeds, from the depredations of birds, or from storms. The utmost diligence is therefore used by the careful husbandman to get it in, and labourers are hired from all quarters to hasten the work.

Pour'd from the villages, a num'rous train
Now spreads o'er all the fields. In form'd array
The reapers move, nor shrink for heat or toil,
By emulation urg'd. Others, disper'd,
Or bind in sheaves, or load, or guide, the wain,

That tinkles as it passes. Far behind,
Old age and infancy, with careful hand,
Pick up each straggling ear.

This pleasing harvest-scene is beheld in its perfection only in the open field countries, where the sight can take in at once an uninterrupted extent of land, waving with corn, and a multitude of people engaged in the various parts of the labour. It is a prospect equally delightful to the eye and the heart, and which ought to inspire every sentiment of benevolence to our fellow creatures, and gratitude to our Creator.

Be not too narrow, husbandmen ! but fling
From the full sheaf, with charitable stealth,
The lib'ral handful. Think, oh ! grateful, think,
How good the God of harvest is to you ;
Who pours abundance o'er your flowing fields !

THOMSON.

The rural festival of *harvest-home* is an extremely natural one, and has been observed in almost all ages and countries. What can more gladden the heart, than to see the long expected

products of the year, which have been the cause of so much anxiety, now safely housed, and beyond the reach of injury.

Inwardly smiling, the proud farmer views
The rising pyramids that grace his yard,
And counts his large increase ; his barns are stor'd ;
And groaning staddles bend beneath their load.

SOMERVILLE.

The poor labourer, too, who has toiled in securing another's wealth, justly expects to partake of the happiness. The jovial harvest supper cheers his heart, and prepares him to begin, without murmuring, the labours of another year.

This month is the season of another kind of harvest in some parts of England, which is the *hop-picking*. The hop is a climbing plant, sometimes growing wild in hedges, and cultivated on account of its use in making malt-liquors. They are planted in regular rows, and poles set for them to run upon. When the poles are covered to the top, nothing can make a more elegant appearance than one of these hop-gardens. At the time of gathering, the poles are

taken up with the plants clinging to them, and the scaly flowering heads, which is the part used, are carefully picked off. These are a finely flavoured bitter which they readily impart to hot water. They improve the taste of beer, and make it keep better. Kent, Sussex, and Worcester, are the counties most famous for the growth of hops.

The uncultivated heaths and commons are now in their chief beauty, from the flowers of different kinds of heath or ling with which they are covered, so as to spread a rich purple hue over the whole ground.

Some of the choicest wall-fruits are now coming into season.

The sunny wall

Presents the downy peach, the shining plum,

The ruddy fragrant nectarine, and, dark

Beneath his ample leaf, the luscious fig.

About the middle of August, the largest of the swallow tribe, the swift or long-wing disappears. Nearly at the same time, rooks no longer pass their nights from home, but roost in their nest-trees.

The red breast, one of our finest though commonest songsters, renews his music about the end of the month.

SEPTEMBER.

THIS is, in general, a very agreeable month, the distinguishing softness and serenity of Autumn, with its deep blue skies, prevailing through great part of it. The days are now very sensibly shortened! and the mornings and evenings are chill and damp, though the warmth is still considerable in the middle of the day. Those who are obliged to be abroad early or late in this season, should be guarded by warm clothing against the cold fogs.

A good deal of corn is yet abroad, especially in the northern parts of the island, at the beginning of September. The first of the month is the day on which it is allowed by law to begin shooting partridges. These birds make their nests in corn-fields, where they bring up

their young, which run after the parents like chickens. While the corn is standing, they have a safe refuge in it; but after harvest, when the sportsman may freely range over the stubble with his pointers, they are either obliged to take to the wing, and offer themselves to the shooter's aim, or are surrounded by nets on the ground, and thus taken in whole coveys.

In his mid career, the spaniel struck,
Stiff, by the tainted gale, with open nose,
Outstretch'd and finely sensible, *draws* full,
Fearful and cautious on the latent prey;
As in the sun the circling covey bask
Their varied plumes, and watchful every way,
Through the rough stubble turn the secret eye.

THOMSON.

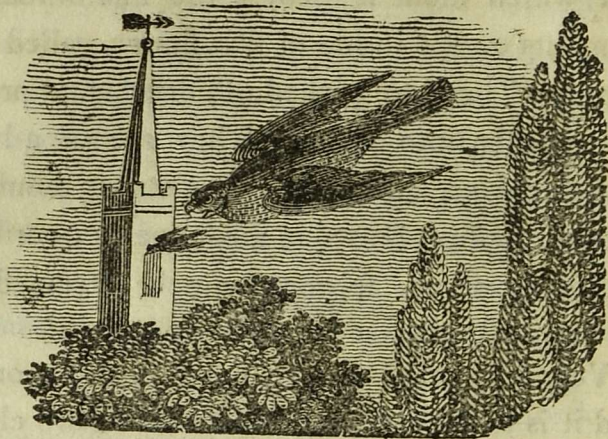
A remarkable product of the earth, collected in this month, is *saffron*. This is cultivated in various parts of Europe; but none is superior to that grown in England, chiefly in the counties of Essex and Cambridge. The saffron plant is a species of the crocus, which is planted in July, and the flowers gathered in September. The

part which alone is used, is the fine branched filaments on the inside of the flower, called the chives. These are picked off, dried, and pressed together into cakes. They are of a high orange colour, and have a very strong aromatic odour. Saffron is used in medicine as a cordial; and its flavor was formerly much esteemed in cookery. It gives a fine deep yellow die.

Very few other flowers open in this month; and it is to the ripening fruits that we are chiefly indebted for variegation of colour in the landscape of nature.

Early in September, a harvest of a peculiar kind is offered to the inhabitants of our sea-coasts, in the immense shoals of herrings, which travelling in a prodigious army from the neighbourhood of the arctic circle, after many divisions and subdivisions, at length appear in the narrow seas which encompass our island. Yarmouth is the principal station in England whence the fishermen proceed in search of this valuable booty.

Towards the end of this month, the chimney or common swallow disappears. There are various



opinions concerning the manner in which these birds dispose of themselves during the winter: some imagining that they all fly away to distant southern regions, where insect food is at all times to be met with; others, that they retire to holes and caverns, or even sink to the bottom of ponds and rivers, where they pass the winter months in a torpid and apparently lifeless state. That many of them migrate to other countries, seems sufficiently proved; but some probably always stay behind, which are the younger broods, or smaller kinds, that are incapable of so long a flight. For some time before their departure, they begin to collect in flocks, set-

ting on trees, basking on the roofs of buildings, or gathering round towers and steeples, whence they take short excursions, as if to try their powers of flight.

Not only the swallow-tribe, but many other small birds which feed on insects, disappear on the approach of cold weather, when the insects themselves are no longer to be met with.

On the other hand, some birds arrive at this season from still more northerly countries to spend the winter with us. The fieldfare and red wing, whose departure was mentioned in March, return about the end of September. They feed chiefly on the berries with which our woods and hedges are plentifully stored all the winter.

Those sweet and mellow-toned songsters, the woodlark, thrush, and blackbird, now begin their autumnal music.

The apples are now gathered for our English vintage, the *cyder-making*, which in some countries is a busy and important employment.

Now, now's the time; ere hasty suns forbid
To work, disburden thou thy sapless wood

Of its rich progeny ; the turgid fruit

Abounds with mellow liquor.

PHILIPS.

The apples are taken either fresh from the tree, or after they have lain awhile to mellow, and crushed in a mill, and then pressed, till all their juice is extracted. This is set to ferment, whence it becomes *cyder*, which may properly be called *apple-wine*. Pears treated in the same manner yield a vinous liquor, called *perry*. These are the common drink in the countries where they are chiefly made.

Another agreeable product, both of our thickets and gardens, the hazel-nut, is fit for gathering at this time.

Ye virgins, come. For you their latest song
The woodlands raise ; the clust'ring nuts for you
The lover finds amid the secret shade ;
And, where they burnish on the topmost bough,
With active vigour crushes down the tree,
Or shakes them ripe from the resigning husk.

The autumnal-equinox, when day and night are again equal over the whole globe, happens about the twenty-third of September. This,

as well as the vernal, is generally attended with storms, which throw down much of the fruit yet remaining on the trees.

OCTOBER.

THE plants having gone through their progressive stages of springing, flowering, and seeding, have at length brought to maturity the rudiments of a future progeny, which are now to be committed to the fostering bosom of the Earth. This being done, the parent vegetable, if of the *herbaceous* kind, either totally dies, or perishes as far as it rose above ground; if a *tree* or *shrub*, it loses all its tender parts which the Spring and Summer had put forth. The winds, which at this time arise, disperse far and wide many seeds, which are curiously furnished with feathers or wings for this purpose. Hence plants with such seeds are universally to be met with; as dandelion, groundsel, rag-wort, thistles, &c. other seeds by means of hooks, lay hold of passing animals, and are thus carried to distant

places. The common burs are examples of this contrivance. Many are contained in berries, which being eaten by birds, the seeds are discharged again uninjured, and grow where they happen to light. Thus carefully has Nature provided for the distribution and propagation of plants.

The gloom of the falling year is in some measure enlivened, during this month especially by the variety of colours, some lively and beautiful, put on by the fading leaves of trees and shrubs.

Those virgin leaves, of purest vivid green,
Which charm'd ere yet they trembl'd on the trees,
Now cheer the sober landscape in decay.

To these temporary colours are added the more durable ones of ripened berries, a variety of which now enrich our hedges. Among these are particularly distinguished the hip, the fruit of the wild rose; the haw, of the hawthorn; the sloe, of the black thorn; the black berry, of the bramble; and the berries of the alder, holly,

and woody-night shade. These are a providential supply for the birds during the winter season; and it is said that they are most plentiful when the ensuing Winter is to be most severe.

The common martin, whose nests hang under the eaves of our houses, afford so agreeable a spectacle of parental fondness and assiduity, usually disappears in October. As this, though one of the smallest of swallow-kind, stays the latest, its emigration to distant climates is less probable than that of the others.

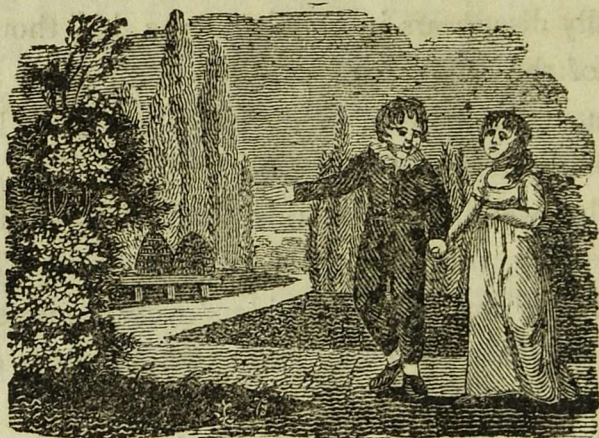
The weather about this time is sometimes extremely misty, with a perfect calm. The ground is covered with spiders' webs innumerable, crossing the path, and extended from one shrub to another.

This month is the height of the hunting season. The temperature of the weather is peculiarly favourable to the sport; and, as the products of the earth are all got in, little damage is done by the horsemen in pursuing their chace across the fields.

All now is free as air, and the gay pack
In the rough bristly stubble range unblam'd;

No widow's tears o'erflow, no secret curse
Swell in the farmer's breast, which his pale lips
Trembling conceal, by his fierce landlord aw'd ;
But courteous now he levels ev'ry fence,
Joins in the common cry, and halloos loud,
Charm'd with the rattling thunder of the field.

SOMERVILLE.



It is usually in October that the bee-hives are despoiled of their honey. As long as flowers are plentiful, the bees continue adding to their store ; but when these fail, they are obliged to begin feeding on the honey they have already made. From this time therefore, the hive grows less and less valuable. Its condition is judged of

by its weight. The common method of getting at the honey is, by destroying the bees with the fumes of burning brimstone. The humane THOMSON exclaims against this practice :

Ah ! see where, robb'd, and murder'd, in that pit
Lies the still-heaving hive ! at ev'ning snatch'd
Beneath the cloud of guilt-concealing night,
And fix'd o'er sulphur ; while not dreaming ill,
The happy people in their waxen cells
Sat, tending public cares, and planning schemes
Of temperance, for Winter poor ; rejoic'd
To mark, full flowing round, their copious stores,
Sudden the dark oppressive stream ascends ;
And, us'd to milder scents, the tender race,
By thousands, tumble from their honey'd domes,
Convolv'd, and agonizing in the dust.
And was it then for this you roam'd the Spring,
Intent from flow'r to flow'r ? for this you toil'd,
Ceaseless, the burning Summer-heats away ?
For this in Autumn search'd the blooming waste,
Nor lost one sunny gleam ; for this sad fate ?

This cruel necessity may be prevented by using hives or boxes properly contrived ; or by employing fumes which will stupefy, but not

kill, them. In this case, however, enough of the honey must be left for their subsistence during the Winter.

In most part of the wine-countries of Europe, the *vintage* takes place in October. The grape is one of the latest fruits in ripening. When gathered, they are immediately pressed, and the juice is fermented, like that of apples in making cyder. A great variety of wines are produced from the different kinds of grapes and the diversity of climates in which they grow. In England this fruit does not ripen constantly enough to be worth cultivation for the purpose of making wine.

This month is particularly chosen, on account of its mild temperature, for the brewing of malt liquor designed for long keeping, which is therefore commonly called *old October*.

At the very close of the month, a few flowers still cheer the eye; and there is a second blow of some kind, particularly the woodbine. But the scent of all these late flowers is comparatively faint.

NOVEMBER.

As the preceding month was marked by the *change*, so this is distinguished by the *fall*, of the leaf. There is something extremely melancholy in this gradual process, by which the trees are stripped of all their beauty, and left so many monuments of decay and desolation. The first of poets has deduced from this quick succession of springing and falling leaves an apt comparison for the fugitive races of men.

Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
Now green in youth, now with'ring on the ground.
Another race the following Spring supplies;
They fall successive, and successive rise;
So generations in their course decay;
So flourish these, when those are pass'd away.

POPE'S HOMER.

This loss of verdure, together with the shortened days, the diminished warmth, and frequent rains, justify the title of the *gloomy month of*

November : and other animals seem to sympathize with man in feeling it as such.

In pensive guise,

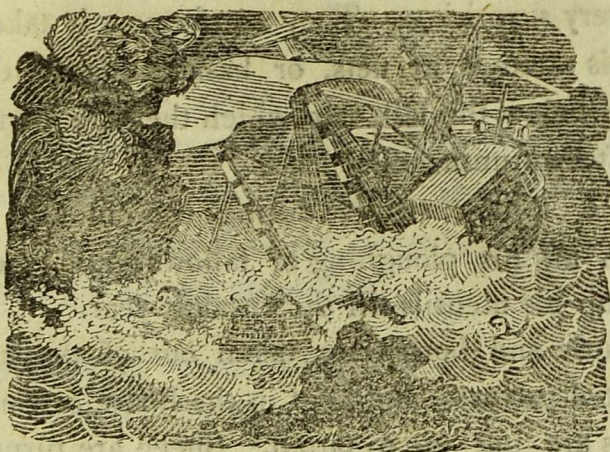
Oft let me wander o'er the russet mead,
And through the sadden'd grove, where scarce is
heard

One dying strain, to cheer the woodman's toil.
Haply some widow'd songster pours his plaint,
Far, in faint warblings, thro' the tawney copse ;
While congregated thrushes, linnets, larks,
And each wild throat, whose artless strains so late
Swell'd all the music of the swarming shades,
Robb'd of their tuneful souls, now shiv'ring sit
On the dead tree, a dull despondent flock ;
With not a brightness waving o'er their plumes,
And nought save chatt'ring discord in their note.

THOMSON.

Intervals of clear and pleasant weather, however, frequently occur ; and in general, the autumnal months are, in our island, softer and less variable than the correspondent ones in Spring.

High winds and storms, frequently occur in



November, which often prove destructive to the seaman, by dashing his ship upon the shore, and strewing it with the wreck. These winds too, at once strip the trees of their faded leaves, and reduce them to their winter-state of nakedness.

O'er the sky the leafy deluge streams;
Till, choak'd and matted with the dreary shower,
The forest walks, at every rising gale,
Roll wide the wither'd waste, and whistle bleak.

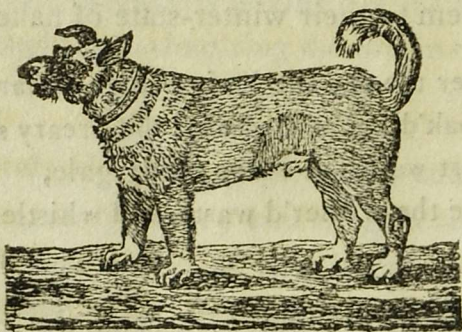
THOMSON.

Salmons now begin to ascend the rivers to spawn. Their force and agility in leaping over cataracts and other obstacles to their ascent

are very surprising. They are frequently taken in this attempt, by nets, or baskets placed directly below the fall, into which they are carried after an unsuccessful leap.

The farmer strives during this month to finish all his ploughing of fallows; and then lays up his utensils till the ensuing year.

Cattle and horses are taken out of the exhausted pastures, and kept in the house or yard. Hogs are put up to fatten. Sheep are turned into the turnip field, or, in stormy weather, feed with hay at the rick.



DECEMBER.

THE changes which take place in the face of Nature during this month, are little more than so many advances in the progress towards universal gloom and desolation.

No mark of vegetable life is seen,
No bird to bird repeats his tuneful call,
Save the dark leaves of some rude evergreen,
Save the lone red-breast on the moss grown
wall. SCOTT.

The day now rapidly decreases; the weather becomes foul and cold.

The rain and wind beat dark December.

In this climate, however, no great and continued severity of cold usually takes place before the close of the month.

Several of the wild quadrupeds now take to their winter concealments, which they either seldom or never quit during the Winter. Of these, some are in an absolute torpid or sleeping

state, taking no food for a considerable time ; others are only drowsy and inactive, and continue to feed on provisions which they have hoarded up. In our mild climate few become entirely torpid. Bats do so, and retire early to caves and holes, where they remain the whole Winter, suspended by the two hind feet, and closely wrapped up in the membranes of the fore feet. As their food is chiefly insects, they can lay up no store for the Winter, and therefore must be starved, did not Nature thus render food unnecessary for them, Dormice also lie torpid the greatest part of the Winter, though they lay up stores of provision. A warm day sometimes revives them, when they eat a little, but soon relapse into their former condition.

Squirrels, and various kinds of field-mice, provide magazines of food against Winter, but are not known to become torpid. The badger, the hedgehog, and the mole, keep close in their winter quarters in the northern regions, and sleep away great part of the season.

The early vegetables which now flourish are the numerous tribes of mosses, and the *lichens*,

or liver-worts. The mosses offer a most curious spectacle to the botanist, at a time when all the rest of Nature is dead to him. Lichens cover the ditch banks, and other neglected spots, with a leather-like substance, which in some countries serves as food both to men and cattle. The reindeer lichen is the greatest treasure of the poor Laplanders, who depend upon it for the support of their only species of domestic cattle, during their tedious winters.

On the twenty-first of December happens the *winter-solstice*, or shortest day; when the sun is something less than eight hours above the horizon even in the southern parts of the island. Soon after this, frost and snow generally begin to set in for the rest of the Winter.

The farmer has little to do out of doors in the course of this month. His chief attention is bestowed on the feeding and management of his cattle, and various matters of household economy.

The festival of Christmas occurs very seasonably to cheer this comfortless season of the year. Great preparations are made for it in the coun-

try, and plenty of rustic dainties are provided for its celebration according to the rites of ancient hospitality. Thus the old year steals away scarcely marked, and unlamented; and a new one begins with lengthening days and brighter skies, inspiring fresh hopes and pleasing expectations.

Mysterious round ! what skill, what force divine,
Deep-felt in these appear ! a simple train,
Yet so delightful, mix'd with such kind art,
Such beauty and beneficence combin'd ;
Shade, unperceiv'd, so soft'ning into shade ;
And all so forming an harmonious whole ;
That, as they still succeed, they ravish still.

THOMSON.

THE END.

