

Friday, March 5, 1875.

The New England Drought and Its Cause. Just now it looks as if the drought, which will render the winter of 1874-5 a memorable one in New England annals, is over, but it is not too late to consider its lesson. For six months the people of the Eastern States have been complaining of want of rain. Hardly a mill in New England has not been obliged to shorten its working hours or perhaps to shut down altogether. Hardly a city whose water supply has not been a source of anxiety for weeks, threatening to fail utterly if relief did not come from the clouds. Hardly a farmer whose cattle have not been saved from suffering by an extra amount of labor and expense in providing them with their daily drink. Water has been an article of commerce in many of our towns, and the situation was growing worse day by day. There have been severe droughts in winters before, but not one of such length, extent and fatality as the present. And we can blame only ourselves and our ancestors for it. In old times a drought was the direct result of a winter of rain-fall, but there has not been so much less than usual this year as to cause all this trouble. In fact, the last winter in New England was pretty well covered with trees, and the rain that fell soaked into the ground, ran slowly down the valleys, and finally reached the ocean. Now the land is stripped of trees, the hills, and the mountain region even, where the sources of our rivers are, have been bared to the scorching rays of the sun, and nearly two-thirds of all the rain that falls evaporates before it reaches the sea-board. This has dried up all the streams into brooks, the brooks into mere rivulets, with dusty bottoms for river beds. This has ruined many of our trout brooks. This, too, by causing the sudden departure of the snow in spring, causes many destructive freshets. In the thick Maine woods the gradual melting of the snow lasts for weeks and keeps the rivers at a high pitch, while the streams, whose headwaters flow from a country stripped of trees, rise and fall with the suddenness of mountain brooks after a shower. The reckless improvidence, due to a cupid and carelessness, which has made so much of our territory a hideous expanse of ragged, rocky, worthless fields, is the cause of our droughts. Impudence must bear the blame, not Providence.—Boston Herald.

Denigration. In commenting, a few days since, upon a dangerous disease of the American press, which was rapidly undermining its influence and seriously hindering all genuine reform, we used, crediting its authorship to Sir Arthur Helps, the word "denigration." In the last but one, and the greatest, of Lord Lytton's novels, there is a very interesting character, who founds a very successful journal upon the principle that average human nature enjoys seeing men and measures heartily abused. This is one species of "denigration," but it is not the one so generally pursued in America, for the reason that it takes a goodly modicum of brains and education to be well carried out. Our "denigrator" is an entirely different character, and we shall best describe him in the words of the learned author whose authority we first quoted in the matter: "Denigration is as common as folly. And why is it so common? Because it is so easy. To praise anything is the judgment of the work of an artist. To condemn, to vilify, to denigrate is within every man's power. The village idiot may observe his neighbor's carriage, and say he is a bad fellow, and that he is a bad fellow, and that he is a bad fellow. It is always complaint and never praise that forms the staple of village idioty's maundering. "Now you must not think that I am talking after the manner of Manuever, who, if he were uttering this penultimate essay, would tell you that the denigrator had in view the abundant malice and envy of mankind, and was accordingly talking with reference to the applause which would be elicited from that prevailing envy and malice. Nothing of the kind. The denigrator talks only what is easiest for him to talk. I go down to the depths of human nature; and I am fully aware of that fact, which most of you philosophers ignore, that man is a very indolent creature. —Sir Arthur Helps, 'Social Pressure,' pp. 155-156.—Cincinnati Times.

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