

WILL BE A SEVERE WINTER.

When it comes to figuring out what kind of a winter this one will be, Farmer Dunn, the New York signal service chieftain, is not in the race with his country rivals, who base their prognostications upon time-honored proverbs and the doings of wild and domestic animals. The *Sun* insists that he is clearly at a disadvantage, because his limited quarters on top of the Equitable building do not admit of the keeping of farmyard animals, and he hasn't time to go over to Jersey to see what the wild ones are doing. So Mr. Dunn doesn't try to compete with the rural prophets, and confines his prognostications to the daily forecast of the weather indications for the coming thirty-six hours.

He says that the old proverbs, in which the modest prophets of the country place such confidence, are all rubbish, and that it is not possible, even with all the costly and new-fangled machinery of the Weather Bureau, to tell what kind of a winter it will be. Coons and 'possums, chickens, and even the breastbone of the goose, he thinks, are utterly unreliable.

The country prophets are practically unanimous, however, in announcing that this will be an uncommonly severe winter, and they say that all the signs agree with their prediction. An Ohio farmer, who says that he has closely observed the doings of the weather for more than forty years, has issued a statement, which reads as follows:

"Coons and 'possums have a heavy growth of fur coming on. The chipmunk and the squirrel are the busiest little animals in the world. The insects have left the north side of the trees in the woods, as you will notice, and the feathers on the geese are heavier than ever before. My young lambs are growing wool that seems marvelous, and sheep that have been sheared are rapidly regaining their fleece. These signs were visible in 1857 and 1858. Another sign of a hard winter is the large hazelnut crop. This means also that lots of boy babies will be born to take the place of those who will be killed in the coming war."

That prediction is followed by others of the same import from all parts of the country. However, this is not an unusual occurrence at this season, because it is just the time of year when the rural weather prophets are busiest, and nine years out of ten they insist that very cold weather is coming.

An Indiana man comes to the front with the announcement that corn-husks are thicker this fall than usual, which, he says, is an infallible sign that there will be cold weather during January and February. Boston's most famous unofficial prophet says that he has been a close observer of the English sparrow for years, and that the birds, which abound in the vicinity of Boston Common, are growing feathers on their legs. There is no doubt in his mind that this is a sign of an extremely cold winter.

Clear moon
Frost soon

is a saying that may be heard frequently in Pennsylvania. An old-time weather sign was the activity displayed by the beavers in laying in an extra large supply of winter food a month earlier than usual when a cold

season was at hand. Similar activity on the part of bears gave warning of a severe season to the hunters in the early days. Bear tracks after the first fall of snow indicated a mild winter. In the fall before a cold and early winter chipmunks are usually abundant. They are always housed by October 1st. Before a mild winter, however, they are to be seen as late as December 1st.

The farmers say that when cows bellow in the evening it is safe to look out for snow during the night. When cattle collect near the barn long before night and remain huddled near it until late in the morning, a severe winter is coming.

When the donkey blows his horn,
'Tis time to house your hay and corn.

is an old saying. A thaw is to be expected when a cat is seen washing her face with her back to a fire.

The old German saying: "If on Candlemas day (Feb. 2) it is bright and clear the ground-hog will stay in its den, thus indicating that more snow and cold are to come, but if it snows or rains it will creep out, as winter has ended," is responsible for the popular superstition regarding groundhog day.

Rural observers assert that hogs gather and store straw, leaves and hay before cold weather sets in. If a mole digs a hole two and a half feet deep, it is an indication that a very severe winter is at hand; if the hole is two feet deep, the cold will not be quite so severe; if one foot deep the winter will be mild. Partridges drum only in a fall when a mild and open winter follows. A scarcity of squirrels in the autumn indicate the approach of a cold winter.

The old standby of the farmer prophets, however, is the breast bone of the goose. The whiteness of the bone indicates the amount of snow that will fall during the winter.

If the November goose bone be thick,
So will the winter weather be;
If the November goose bone be thin,
So will the winter weather be.

If the bone is red or has many red spots, expect a cold and stormy winter; but if only a few spots are visible, the winter will be mild.

An authority says that the saying, "Everything is lovely and the goose hawks high"—not "hangs high," as it is frequently quoted—is a weather proverb, meaning that when wild geese fly high it is a sign of fair weather.

When birds of passage arrive early in their southern passage severe weather may be looked for soon. Blackbirds flocking together in the fall indicate a spell of cold weather. If crows fly south cold weather will follow; if north, a warm spell may be expected.

If birds in autumn grow tame,
The winter will be too cold for game.

Turkeys perched on trees and refusing to descend indicate snow to be initiated. When wild ducks fly to the south it is a sign that winter is coming. When the woodpecker disappears in the fall look out for a cold winter. When the ivory-billed woodpecker goes to work at the bottom of a tree and goes to the top, removing all the outer bark on his way, it is an indication that there will be deep snow and plenty of it. A fog in February indicates a frost in May.

An old saying is: "He that would have a bad day must go out in a fog after frost," and another is: "A win-

ter's fog will freeze a dog." Bearded frost is a forerunner of snow. Frost that occurs in the dark of the moon kills fruit buds and blossoms, but frost in the light of the moon will not kill. Early frosts are usually followed by a long and hard winter. The first frost of the season, the farmers say, occurs six weeks after the first song of the first katydid.

Heavy white frost is a sign that warmer weather is coming. Black frost is the forerunner of a spell of dry, cold weather. Bearded frost indicates a cold winter with much snow. Hoar frost is a sign of rain. Rural observers say there will be as many frosts in June as there are fogs in February. Three white frosts, they say, will bring a storm every time.

Christmas comes on Tuesday this year. Here is a curious stanza from the Harleian manuscript in the British Museum:

If Christmas day on Tuesday be,
That year shall many women die,
And that winter grow great marvels.
Ships shall be in great perils.
That year shall kings and lords be slain,
And many other people near them.
A dry summer that year shall be,
As all that are born therein may see.
They shall be strong and covetous.
If thou steal aught thou losest thy life,
For thou shalt die through sword or knife;
But if thou fall sick 'tis certain
Thou shalt turn to life again.

Old sayings have it that if All Saints' day will bring out the winter, St. Martin's day will bring out the Indian summer. If ice will bear a man before Christmas it will not bear a mouse afterward. The three days of September 20, 21 and 22 rule the weather for October, November and December. The first three days of January indicate that of the coming three months. The twelve days between December 25 and January 5 are the keys to the weather for the twelve months of the ensuing year.

If October is warm the following February will be cold. If October brings heavy frosts and winds January and February will be mild. Much rain in October indicates much wind in December.

"A green Christmas makes a full churchyard" is a familiar saying. Others are that a green Christmas makes a white easter. The more snow the more healthy the season. A snow year is a rich year. In winter expect fair weather from one night's ice. An early winter is severely winter. After a warm autumn a long winter. A clear autumn brings a windy winter. When the birds and badgers are fat in October a cold winter may be looked for.

Onion skins very thin,
Mild winter coming on;
Onion skins thick and tough,
Coming winter cold and rough.

Perhaps the best general winter proverb is from the Persian: "In winter a fire is better than a Muscat rose."

AFTER FIFTY YEARS.

Mr. John Coursey, of Great Falls, Montana, who is now visiting his sister, Mrs. John W. Hoover and other relatives in this city, is the gentleman mentioned in the *News*, Saturday, September 29th, in a clipping from the *Great Falls Tribune*, who had not seen his mother for over fifty years, and who was brought into communication with her through the suggestion of his attorney, Mr. Hoffman, of Great Falls.