

N THE CITY ON SALT CREEK.

BY FLORA BULLOCK.

The wisdom of the weatherwise runs thusly: As long as we can be pretty sure of a soaker like that of Sunday night, after three days of south wind, we can make out to stand the south wind, and shout for Nebraska all the time. Mr. Loveland, it is said, knew there was a low barometer "loafing around" within convenient distance, and during all the preceding week he had been offering it every inducement known to his profession, had been practicing all the wiles of his art to get the manager to bring the big performance hither, and the low barometer played to an appreciative audience. There have been times when the menfolks sat on the dried lawns every evening for weeks and discussed the probabilities; when the south wind never ceased and life was awful. Then we prayed for a "roller" in the west, but it did not come till the corn stood yellow in the field in August. Some one said the other evening, "You remember the 26th of July, '94?" Days fix themselves in the memory as with a hot brand.

Nowadays we talk glibly of "low barometer," whatever that is—the weather makers admit that they do not know how the "low" is made. It looks very unlearned not to bring in the barometer situation when you discuss weather. But after all, the old-fashioned signs are satisfactory. It seems easier now than formerly to read the weather in the wind. A south-east wind for three days—then look for a long black "roller" coming majestically up from the west, or at any rate a cessation of hostilities and a cool north breeze. During the last three years we have enjoyed the friendship of the east wind so much that we ought to begin to know it. As for the south-west wind—let us hope it will seldom visit us for it is the messenger of drouth and burning.

I always envy those who can light their lamps, close the blinds to shut out the evening storm and go on with their books as if nothing were happening. It is impossible for me to do any thing but sit at the window to look and listen. The swaying of the trees, the swirl of wind-blown spray, the uncanny twilight all attract me. Then if I can find a high window I will post myself there to glory in the rush of the clouds and note the whiteness of the rain against the hills. Lightning flash and the roll of thunder fascinate me—though I will candidly confess that the thunder which says, "You're safe this time," suits me best. But then there is such a solemnity about the rain and storm that the hours at the window are perhaps not wasted. In a grown-up way one feels like the children of the house. I found them prancing up and down making an amount of noise. "What's this?" I asked. "We're praising," they declared. The rain is so pretty."

During the last few weeks I have been watching the modus operandi of several gangs of artisans and making comparisons. Plasterers, carpenters, masons, painters, plumbers, carpet-beaters, and of a mercantile class, second-hand men have come under my observation. And I believe I know more of what mortal slowness looks like than I did before, having learned by direct demonstration as well as by contrast. I am ready to paraphrase the "Give us, oh give us, the man who sings at his work," to give us, oh give us, the man who works at his work. You may not believe it but it is true, that there are merchants of second-hand goods who can fleece you in such an energetic, masterfully business-like

way that you succumb with a gasp of admiration. A second-hand man who will come when you ask him, tell you in two minutes what he can give for your cast off furniture, go, and have the goods carried away in half an hour is worth his weight in gold. He would thrive as a millionaire and be worshipped as a diner out.

Then it is almost fascinating to see a gang of plasterers who drive right through a piece of work as if getting done was a matter of life and death, doing a clean job while about it. There are many common folks carrying their messages to Garcia, after all, but some of them—oh, it would take them a thousand years to get there.

The "message to Garcia" by the way is useful in the school room; it arouses a sense of opposition at first in pupils because they—if they are just at the mean age—are not accustomed to blame themselves or search their ways for faults. But soon they begin to notice that, like the idiotic clerk in the essay, they are asking useless questions, and they take pride in their task, a message to Garcia. I found it so with a class of blind pupils, who need all the stimulating and prodding possible.

The lawns of the city gave a vote of thanks to the powers for not shutting up the rain supply under a meter system. Then it would be a dry time for them. The city officials say the meter system is proving a fine one for the finances of the water office and beneficial in the way of increase of pressure by its constant incentive to the suppression of leaks. But somehow it doesn't seem to be good for the lawns. Children don't play with the hose so much and graceful, movable whirligigs are not nearly so numerous. People who used to observe religious punctuality in turning the water on at six and turning it before the last echo of the whistle don't water their lawns at all now. Five dollars was cheerfully given for a chance to get all you could in a given time, but when it comes to paying for every drop, economy seizes the soul. You will see some thirsty lawns by September.

Another new wrinkle in the affairs of folks who live in the ice coupon. Oh, but it is dreadful! You have to pay for every bit of ice you get. If you are to have company to tea and want an extra chunk the man calls for another coupon. Thus are the people oppressed. It must be the fault of trusts. Always before the icemen were so obliging.

TENSION.

The night was round and dark and still
And hollow as a sphere,
Belted with iron memories,
Bolted with bars of fear.

The loud hush beat upon my face,
The blackness reeled and sang,
When from an outer undreamed place
A sudden bird-note sprang.

All in the middle of the night,
Hollow and grim—but hark!
That blissful note unbound my throat,
Unwound the tightening dark.

A chaffinch, dreaming in her sleep
Of purple thistle balm,
Released the spell of silence fell;
The night grew wide and calm.
—Florence Wilkinson,
in July "New Lippincott."

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THE SONG OF THE SINGER.

Day long upon the dreaming hills
One watched the idle hours fade by
And had no thought of other thing
Than waving grass and summer sky.

And all the wilding scents and sounds
The lavish hearted season brought,
He made his own and prisoned them
Within the little songs he wrought.

While he was singing, in the town
His busy brethren bought and sold,
And got them place and circumstance,
And all the pride and pomp of gold.

But when the night came with the stars,
And on the hills her silence laid,
He, homeward turning, bore with him
Naught save the careless songs he made.

"O Prodigal!" his brothers cried,
"And have you done no better thing?
And is it thus you spend your day—
To dream of sunshine and to sing?"

But he, remembering those still hours
The dream had made so eloquent—
The waving grass the summer sky,
The purple hill-side—smiled, content.

—Arthur Ketchum,
in the August "New Lippincott."

Losing the Wheat Belt.

One of the unreported speeches at Kansas City was delivered in a hotel lobby by a Kansas delegate with a queer laugh that can hardly be expressed in print, but that was irresistably infectious. He said:

"Folks in our parts ain't as hot for Bryan as they uster be. He made a bad break on wheat—Heugh! Ho! Heu! He tol' us there couldn't be dollar wheat till we got sixteen to one silver. Well, we've had dollar wheat onct or twicet, and we're goin' to have it agin—Heugh! Ho! Heu!—but there hain't been no change in silver 'cept it's goin' lower, and we're chasin' sixteen to one just the same. This kinder shakes our confidence in Bryan, and we're 'bout ready to vote for somebody that don't set up as a prophet or don't get found out. Heugh! Ho! Heu! You can't count on the Bryan vote in the Wheat Belt that we gave four years ago; we've learned somethin' since then."

A bystander interrupted by saying that Bryan would explain, in his speech accepting the nomination, the phenomenal conditions through which wheat had risen while silver dropped.

"Big words don't scare me," continued the Kansas delegate. "I've been to school and know what 'phenomenal conditions' means. The biggest phenomenon I've seen yet is the man who has the cheek to ask for a second nomination after makin' the biggest blunder of the nineteenth century 'bout wheat and money. Heugh! Ho! Heu!"—Town Topics.

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