



You and Phenology

► IF YOU have ever taken note of the date on which the first robin appeared in your neighborhood, or the first pussy-willows or skunk-cabbages appeared, you have been a phenologist.

Phenology is one of the most fascinating of the open-air sciences. It consists essentially in the systematic observation of the dates on which things happen: the first robin, the first violet, the first oak

leaves, the first mosquito. It can go on all season: the first corn tassel, the first goldenrod, the first wild aster. As the year grows older, last things become worth noting: the last gentian, the last flight of wild ducks, the last housefly.

The word phenology comes from a Greek root meaning to disclose, to make visible or manifest. It is related to the common word, phenomenon, and to the post-Christmas feast of the Epiphany. (Incidentally, watch typists and printers who meet the word for the first time, lest they slip in a falsifying "r": phenology has no more to do with phrenology than entomology has to do with etymology.)

Phenology is a practically useful science as well as a fascinating hobby. Its pragmatic value is well demonstrated by its antiquity. Farmers' and woodsmen's lore is largely rough-and-ready phenology; Virgil's *Georgics* is an early textbook on the subject. The Bible is full of phenology, especially the New Testament parables: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh."

Your own phenological notebook can be as full or as simple as suits your own convenience. The important thing is to

make it a year-to-year undertaking. Down one side list all the birds, flowers, trees and so on that you intend to watch, for first appearance, first nest, first eggs, first fledglings, first flowers, first leaves, first fruits, first signs of ripening, etc. Rule columns for each year, from 1945 until you are so old your eyes won't serve you any more, or your legs carry you afield.

An especially worth-while kind of phenological observations are those that are made on the same individual organism, if it is one that stays put. Trees are especially well suited to this kind of check-up, being both long-lived and firmly anchored. If you have a favorite elm or maple in your front yard, a pet apple or cherry tree on your lot, a familiar dogwood or hickory in the woods, it will become a better, more intimate neighbor than ever if you make a habit of asking it from time to time, "How are you feeling this spring? How did you come through the winter? Are all the little apples growing nicely?"

There can be a lot of fun in phenology.

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Tin and lead were definitely shown by the monk, Basil Valentine, to be distinct metals in 1450 A. D.

In the Genesis of the Rheumatic State

nutritional inadequacy of the diet appears to play an important role. Though multiple deficiency may be more conducive than deficiency of a single factor, insufficient protein intake apparently engenders increased susceptibility.* Thus an adequate amount of meat, with its high content of biologically optimal protein, gains added importance in the dietary of children.

*In a study of children and adolescents, undertaken to determine if nutrition exerts a conditioning influence in the genesis of rheumatic fever, Coburn and Moore conclude: "This indicates that the association between greater susceptibility and a deficient intake of protein is statistically significant . . . That a lack of those proteins most useful in growth and repair may be important in conditioning a subject to rheumatism is compatible with all observations made during this study." COBURN, A. F., and MOORE, L. V.: Nutrition as a Conditioning Factor in the Rheumatic State, *Am. J. Dis. Child.* 65:744 (May) 1943.



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