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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed November 3, 1927.

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A GOOSEBONE WEATHER PROPHECY

According to an old German superstition, the breast-bone from a roast goose eaten on Martinmas Eve (Nov. 10) shows what kind of winter is coming. If the bone is thick, the winter will be severe, while a thin bone denotes a mild winter. White spots mean much snow, and there are still other elaborations.

This notion has been kept alive in the United States by the Pennsylvania Germans (who, however, eat the prophetic goose on Thanksgiving Day). Many years ago there flourished at Reading, Pennsylvania, a weather prophet of purely local renown named Elias Hartz. One day Hartz entered the office of the Reading Eagle and exhibited a goosebone as a proof that the following winter would be a hard one. One of the staff saw good "copy" in Hartz and his goosebone, and proceeded to write him up. The initial article was followed by many more, published in New York and Philadelphia papers and widely copied throughout the country, setting forth the more or less mythical prophetic announcements of this oracle. When he died, fifteen years later, thousands of columns about him had appeared in the American press. He received so many letters from all over the country that he would have needed a private secretary if he had attempted to answer them. Visitors to Reading sought him out. Eventually a cigar was named after him.

Though Elias Hartz, the goosebone weather prophet, was a real person, the stories published about him originated almost entirely in the brain of the clever newspaperman just mentioned. It was this same genius who subsequently invented the tales of the annual "conventions," said to have been held by the weather prophets of Berks County, at which the prophets compared notes and decided what kind of winter was at hand.

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