

Released on receipt
but intended for use
December 16, 1927.

A Science Service Feature

?... WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed December 9, 1927.

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WHY THE WEATHERCOCK?

The weathercock, in the literal sense of the term, dates back at least to the ninth century, for in the year 1652 it was recorded that a vane of this sort at Brixen, in the Tyrol, bore an inscription stating that it had been erected by Bishop Rampertus in the year 820. Brewer, in his "Dictionary of Phrase and Fable," tells us that a Papal decree of the ninth century required that every church steeple should be adorned with one of these birds, as the emblem of St. Peter, but this statement needs verification.

The origin of the weathercock is, in fact, still obscure though there has been no lack of speculation on the subject. One thing is certain; this particular form of vane was used widely, and almost exclusively, on ecclesiastical buildings for hundreds of years and therefore must have had some special religious significance. There is a medieval Latin poem beginning "Multi sunt presbyteri," which explains the cock on the steeple as a symbol of the priestly life and points out a variety of more or less plausible parallels between clerk and Chanticleer, even to the resemblance between the cock's bald pate and the tonsure!

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