

Released on receipt
but intended for use
June 12, 1928

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed June 5, 1928

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology

"PROTECTION" FROM HAILSTORMS

How the ancient Greeks attempted to keep hailstorms from devastating their crops and vineyards is told in Seneca's "Quaestiones Naturales". The town of Cleonae, in Argolis, he says, employed watchmen to give warning of the approach of hail clouds, which were recognized by their color. When the alarm was sounded people sacrificed a lamb or a pullet; whereupon, it was alleged, the threatening clouds changed their course. Those who had no animals to sacrifice scratched their fingers with a sharp stylus, and this was supposed to ^{be} equally efficacious - as it undoubtedly was!

In the days of Charlemagne European peasants set up tall poles in their fields bearing at the top strips of parchment inscribed with incantations against hail.

Various charms are still employed in rural Italy to avert hailstorms. Professor Guisepe Bellucci tells us how, in Umbria, the peasants on Palm Sunday attach to the tops of trees adjacent to their fields consecrated olive branches or bits of charred wood from the Yule log. In some districts they spread ashes from the Yule log tree on the fields in the shape of a cross, or hang amulets and religious emblems of various kinds on the trees, or ring little silver bells - all to keep away hailstorms.

Since the beginning of the present century millions of dollars have been wasted in Europe in bombarding the clouds as a means of protection against hail. Another costly folly was the erection of tall "hail-rods", many of which were installed in France under government auspices just before the world war.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE,
21st and B Sts.,