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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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PORTENTS OF WINTER

The country correspondents of city newspapers are now busily rounding up information from (real or fictitious) rural sages as to the kind of winter we are going to have; the predictions being ostensibly based upon various phenomena of the animal and vegetable worlds. The prophets are supposed to draw their conclusions from the thickness of animals' fur, onion skins and corn husks; from the height of wasps' nests above the ground; from the coloration of caterpillars; from the building activities of beavers and muskrats; from the food stores of chipmunks and squirrels; from the dates on which migratory birds take flight. A little later -- along about Thanksgiving -- we shall hear from the goosebone prognosticators, who are said to examine the breastbone extracted from a roast goose and to judge of the coming winter from its shape and color -- even as Roman soothsayers inspected the entrails of sacrificial animals to ascertain the will of the gods.

How much truth is there in all these "signs" of winter weather, Not one atom! The biological phenomena of autumn are the results of conditions that have gone before, including the weather of the previous months. They have no conceivable connection with the weather of the months following.

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