

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WEATHER NOTIONS

St. Dunstan was a great brewer and sold himself to the devil on condition that his Satanic Majesty would blight the apple-trees and so stop the production of the rival drink--cider. It was, however, stipulated that the blight should be accomplished in three days--the 17th, 18th and 19th of May--the last of these being St. Dunstan's Day. Hence the cold weather that--if we accept popular tradition--usually occurs about that time.

If the Indian hunter could hang his powder-horn on the crescent moon, he did so and stayed at home, because he knew the woods would be too dry to still-hunt. If he could not hang his powder-horn on the crescent he put it on his shoulder and went hunting, because he knew the woods would be wet and that he could stalk game noiselessly. Exactly the contrary notion prevails in Scotland, where the proverb runs,

"The bonnie moon lies on her back;
Mend your shoes and sort your thack" (thatch).

In other words, expect rain when the crescent is in a nearly horizontal position. One idea is just as nonsensical as the other.

If it rains on St. Medard's Day (June 8), it will rain on every one of the forty days following. But St. Swithin's Day (July 15) comes within this forty-day period, and, as everybody has heard rain, on St. Swithin's Day is likewise followed by forty days of wet weather. Hence rain on the 8th of June means daily showers until the 24th of August!

Such is weather folklore.

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