

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
September 23, 1929

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed September 16, 1929

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

EQUINOCTIAL STORMS

The delusive notion that the equinoxes of spring and fall are particularly stormy periods of the year is one of hoary antiquity. Its origin has not been traced, but it doubtless took its rise at a time when astrology passed for sound science, and all things terrestrial were supposed to be governed by the movements of the heavenly bodies. There are many allusions to the belief in classical literature. Catullus, for example, refers to the "caeli furor aequinoctialis" -- the raging of the equinoctial sky.

The notion flourishes today in western Europe; particularly in the British Isles. Several references to it in English literature are cited in the New English Dictionary; the earliest dating from the middle of the eighteenth century. A variant of the belief is found in western England, where people talk of "Michael-riggs" -- strong winds supposed to prevail about Michaelmas (September 29).

The American conception of equinoctial storms differs somewhat from the ideas prevailing abroad. In this country we rarely hear of such storms occurring at the time of the vernal equinox -- though the month of March as a whole has an undeserved reputation for windiness -- but there is a well-settled belief that a single stormy period invariably occurs some time around the autumnal equinox (falling this year on September 23).

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

SCIENCE SERVICE
21st and B Sts.;
Washington, D. C.