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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 6, 1930.

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ITALIAN WEATHER LORE

An English meteorologist, Miss C.M. Botley, calls our attention to a fund of interesting information concerning the weather folklore of the Italian peasantry found in the book "Through the Apennines and the Lands of the Abruzzi," by Estella Canziani. The facts were collected in 1913.

The peasants believe that there are male and female spirits in the hail-storm, who together make hail. "Once," says the author, "a priest who was passing the Palena mountain saw a male and female spirit making hail, and to stop them he put the largest hailstone he could find on the palm of a child under seven years old (the most innocent of the family) because he believed the tempest would last only the time the hailstone took to melt."

In Lanciano devils and bad spirits make the hail, and the more snow there is on the mountains the more hail there will be, because the devils have more material to work with. Lightning is said to be the work of lost souls.

Whirlwinds arise on the spot where somebody has been murdered, or else they are the work of a kind of elves, called "mazzamarelle." Sailors cut the air with black-handled knives to dispel waterspouts; a custom that has prevailed for centuries and not exclusively among the Italians.

The story is told of a fisherman who cut the air with his knife to dispel a spout, but failed and his boat capsized. On returning home, he found that his wife had a cut finger. He was convinced that she had been the waterspout, but was now liberated from that form, and he so ill-treated her that she died.

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