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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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LIGHTNING FOLKLORE

The idea that lightning, after striking the earth, rebounds to the clouds is found in the old mythologies. The thunderbolts hurled by Indra were said thus to return to his hand, and the same tale was told of Odin's spear and Thor's hammer, both of which were identified with lightning. A survival of this notion is the custom still prevalent in some parts of Bavaria of leaving all the windows open during a thunderstorm so that if lightning enters a house it may have free vent to get out again.

"You must take your hat off to the lightning in the South American town of Quito," says an English journal, "unless you want to be guilty of very bad form. There the lightning is deeply respected. Everyone removes his hat when it flashes, no matter if rain is falling, and when the streets are busy and lightning is abundant a grotesque effect is produced by these salutations."

In the Tyrol the mountaineers throw nettles on the fire to protect themselves from lightning. In northern Italy an olive branch is kept on the chimney-piece for the same purpose.

In ancient times it was considered sacrilegious to imitate thunder and lightning. Virgil, in the "Aeneid," tells the story of Salmoncus, who drove his chariot over a brazen bridge to make the sound of thunder and darted torches on every side to counterfeit lightning. He was destroyed for his presumption by the real thunderbolts of Jove.

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