

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 21, 1930.

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KEY DAYS

There are many old proverbs and sayings to the effect that the weather on certain dates indicates the weather that will prevail during subsequent more or less distant periods of the year. The days to which this prognostic character are ascribed are sometimes called "key days."

One familiar tradition relating to such days is embodied in the popular German work "Bauern-Praktik," of which scores of editions have been published in many languages. According to this tradition, the weather prevailing on each of the twelve days beginning with Christmas points to that of a corresponding month later in the year; Christmas itself showing the weather for January, and so on.

The notion that rain or dry weather on St. Swithin's Day (July 15) is a sign of similar weather for the forty days following belongs to the same order of ideas, and so does the Candlemas Day superstition, which has become the Groundhog Day joke in America. The following proverbs belong to the same category:

"Where the wind is on Martinmas Eve, there it will be for the rest of the winter."

"St. Stephen's Day windy, bad for next year's grapes."

"Easter in snow, Christmas in mud; Christmas in snow, Easter in mud."

Traditions concerning key days are not based on any meteorological theory, however crude. They are merely survivals of a superstitious age when all events affecting the welfare of mankind were believed to "cast their shadows before them."

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