

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE GOOSEBONE

Though the word "goosebone" has not yet found its way into the dictionaries, it is familiar in most parts of the United States and Canada as applied to the breastbone of a roast goose, utilized as a means of making longrange weather predictions.

Just how often in the late autumn of the year rustic sages actually inspect this portion of a goose's anatomy for the purpose of learning whether the succeeding winter is to be mild or severe is a matter of complete uncertainty, but the newspaper paragraphers would have us believe that the practice is habitual in some parts of America; particularly among the Pennsylvania-Germans, who were responsible for introducing it from the Old World.

According to a tradition that has prevailed for centuries in Germany, a thick bone means a cold winter and a thin one the reverse, while significance is also attached to the coloration and certain other features of the prophetic sternum. Such notions are, of course, purely superstitious. They are closely akin to the "doctrine of signatures" that once reigned in medical botany as well as to the old Roman idea of inspecting the entrails of a sacrificial animal for tokens of coming events.
