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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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BELL-RINGING IN STORMS

The custom of ringing church bells to drive away thunderstorms and furnish protection from lightning and hail was general in the middle ages and was still practiced to a considerable extent in Catholic countries as recently as a century ago. Latin inscriptions found on many old bells refer to their supposed virtue in this respect.

Sir J. G. Frazer tells us that in many German communities the sexton received an allowance of grain from the farmers for his exertions in pulling the bell-rope during thunderstorms. At Jubar, in the Altmark, each farmer gave five "thunder-sheaves" of corn for the supposed protection thus afforded his crops. It was also the custom in some parts of Germany for the children to ring little hand-bells, adorned with the figures of saints, as a means of driving away storms. Under certain feudal tenures the vassals were bound to ring the church bells during thunderstorms, as well as on some other specified occasions.

At Caloto, in Colombia, one of the church bells formerly enjoyed such a reputation as a safeguard against thunderstorms that pieces of it were sought for use as clappers in small bells to be rung in other parts of the country.

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