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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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"PLANETS"

In many parts of rural England when showers come and go, or occur in scattered places, people say that it "rains by planets." In North Country dialect, however, the rain is said to fall "in planets" when it falls in a heavy local down-pour. These expressions are very old and are probably remnants of astrological notions concerning the control of weather by the heavenly bodies. So thought John Ray, who, in his "Collection of English Proverbs," published in 1670, refers to the saying, "It rains by planets," remarking, "This the country people use when it rains in one place but not in another; meaning that the showers are governed by the planets."

In the Lincolnshire dialect a "planet" is a brief local shower, but in the North Country the same word often means climate.

In Sussex, according to Dr. Joseph Wright, overcast, thundery weather is described as "planety." W. R. Butterfield, in a recent article on the dialect of the Hastings fishermen, says: "When there is a dead calm, with the air hot and moist, the weather is said to be 'planety'; if it is oppressively sultry, with a heavy sky and oily sea, it is 'swallocky.'"

According to my own estimate, fully fifteen hundred terms relating to weather are peculiar to the various dialects spoken in the British Isles.

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