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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DEATH AND STORMS

Weather folklore includes several curious superstitions associating the death of human beings with stormy manifestations of the elements. The saying that "there will always be a storm after the death of an old woman" is recorded in the Journal of American Folklore. In Brittany the peasants believe that the death of a usurer or a rich person who has been harsh toward the poor is always followed by a violent thunderstorm.

There is an English superstition that a high wind betokens the approaching death of some distinguished person. This idea is embodied in the following quotation from Pepys' Diary:

"Waked with a very high wind, and said to my wife, 'I pray God I hear not of the death of any great person, this wind is so high' fearing that the Queene might be dead."

An old number of the Gentleman's Magazine says:

"A superstition prevails among the lower classes of many parts of Worcestershire that when storms, heavy rains or other elemental strifes take place at the death of a great man the spirit of the storm will not be appeased till the moment of burial. This superstition gained great strength on the occasion of the Duke of Wellington's funeral, when, after some weeks of heavy rain and one of the highest floods ever known in England, the skies began to clear and both rain and flood abated. It was a common observation in the week before the interment of his grace, 'Oh, the rain won't give over till the duke is buried.'"

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