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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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AUTUMNAL "SUMMERS"

The name "Indian summer" originated in America in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and it has spread in comparatively recent times to other parts of the world. Its early history is shrouded in obscurity, and the authorities have not yet been able to decide how the word "Indian" came to be used in connection with a period of mild weather in autumn; whether it was because this period was a favorite hunting season with the redskins, or a time propitious for their attacks on the whites, or the season when Indian corn was harvested; or whether it was because the smoke in the air during Indian summer was caused by fires set by the Indians, or because the pleasant weather, which was likely to change without warning, was regarded as sharing the Indians' proverbial characteristics of treachery and deceitfulness.

On the other hand, the belief that a second "summer" always occurs in the autumn is one that prevailed in Europe long before Indian summer was ever heard of, and it is probable that our North American ideas on this subject, like our ideas about the "equinoctial storm," are based on the traditions of the Old World. European notions concerning this supposed renewal of summer warmth in the autumn differ in one respect from the ideas prevailing in America. Instead of being, as with us, supposed to come at different times in different years, it is generally said to occur at a particular time each year, though ideas about the date of its occurrence vary from one part of Europe to another. Some of the numerous European names applied to the traditional warm spell refer to the dates of its supposed arrival. Thus "St. Martin's summer," the commonest name for it in central and southern Europe, implies that it comes about St. Martin's Day (November 11); "St. Luke's little summer," a name common in England, that it is due about St. Luke's Day (October 18); and "St. Michael's summer," one of its names in Germany, that it arrives about St. Michael's Day (September 29).

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