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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 18, 1932

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DEMANDING RAIN FROM ON HIGH

Praying for rain in time of drought is a familiar procedure. Somewhat less familiar are the impious measures to which, when such prayers proved unavailing, religious people have occasionally resorted in order to get the desired results. Frazer, in "The Golden Bough," tells of a drought that caused great distress in Sicily in the spring of 1893. The people prayed, held religious processions, burned innumerable candles and spread over the fields the dust swept from the churches on Palm Sunday; all to no purpose.

"At last," says Frazer, "the peasants began to lose patience. Most of the saints were banished. At Palermo they dumped St. Joseph in a garden to see the state of things for himself, and they swore to leave him there in the sun till rain fell. Other saints were turned, like naughty children, with their faces to the wall. Others, again, stripped of their beautiful robes, were exiled far from their parishes, threatened, grossly insulted, ducked in horse-ponds. At Caltanisotta the golden wings of St. Michael the Archangel were torn from his shoulders and replaced with wings of pasteboard; his purple mantle was taken away and a clout wrapped about him instead. At Licata the patron saint, St. Angelo, fared even worse, for he was left without any garments at all; he was reviled, he was put in irons, he was threatened with drowning or hanging. 'Rain or the rope!' roared the angry people at him, as they shook their fists in his face."

W.J. Humphreys, in his book "Rain Making," quotes a similar episode from another part of the world. "The Chinese," he says, "when the fields were parched, have made a dragon to represent the rain god and drawn it about in a procession, expecting by this honor to inspire him to a kindly mood. If the rain came all was well and the god loudly praised, but if the drought continued the dragon was torn to pieces and the god perhaps even publicly deposed from the rank of a deity."

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