

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt  
but intended for use  
May 26, 1933

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed May 19, 1933

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

ALMANAC WEATHER PROPHECIES

"The early almanacs," says Richard Inwards, "boldly gave a prediction for the weather for every day in the year; but after a time confined themselves to a general statement of the weather. For instance, Partridge's Almanac for 1835 has the following prophecy for June: 'Fertilising showers attended with thunder and lightning.' This does for the first ten days. 'Fair and at times hot' is for the middle of the month, and 'refreshing rain for the grass and corn' for any time between the 21st and the end of the month.

"Authors of weather almanacs had already begun to seek safety in vagueness. Some of these almanacs rose to a great popularity on the strength of one lucky guess; and I think it is told of this same Partridge's almanac or some other of the class, that it owed its reputation to a curious prophecy of extraordinary weather for July 31st, when hail, rain, snow, thunder, etc. were freely indicated. Forgetting that the month had 31 days the almanac-maker had omitted to insert the weather prediction for the last day, and a boy was sent from the printing office to know how the space was to be filled up. The weather prophet was too busy to attend to him, but at last, in a passion, said: 'Put down hail, rain, snow, thunder, anything;' and the boy, taking it literally, told the compositor, who duly set into type the extraordinary prediction, which by a freak of nature came true, and made the fame and fortune of the almanac-maker. This story if not true is at least 'ben trovato.'"

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

-----  
SCIENCE SERVICE  
21st and Constitution Ave.  
Washington, D.C.