

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt  
but intended for use  
September 28, 1933

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 21, 1933

MATHIEU DE LA DRÔME

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

Outside the ranks of orthodox meteorologists there have been a number of persons whose weather predictions, mostly of the "long-range" variety, though altogether unsound and unscientific, have brought them much fame. One of the most celebrated of these prognosticators was a Frenchman named Philippe Antoine Mathieu de la Drôme, or, as he usually wrote his name, Mathieu (de la Drôme).

Mathieu was born in 1808 and died in 1865. He was an ardent politician, was elected to the Constituent Assembly, and was imprisoned and then exiled from France in consequence of the coup d'état of December, 1851. He returned to his country in 1859. About 1855 he turned his attention to the subject of weather prediction, and in 1862 he published a memoir on this subject, addressed to the Minister of Public Instruction, bearing on the title page the motto "One can predict the weather as one predicts the rising and setting of the heavenly bodies." The system of prediction set forth in this work is based on the movements of the moon and atmospheric tides.

In 1864 appeared the first of a series of almanacs bearing his name, published by himself and his descendants down to a recent time. The almanacs contained weather predictions, originally so general in their wording that they could hardly fail. Later, after the founder's death, the predictions became much more specific as to both time and place, and covered all parts of Europe. As has happened in connection with a good many other almanac weather forecasts, those of Mathieu, though perfectly worthless, attained immense popularity.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

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