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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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FRANKLIN'S FORECASTS

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Benjamin Franklin published a number of jocular weather predictions of one sort or another in his Poor Richard's Almanacs. The issue of 1736 contained three of a "believe-it-or-not" character, including the following:

1. Before the middle of this year a wind will rise, during which the waters of the sea and rivers will be in such manner raised that^a great part of the towns of Boston, Newport, New York and Philadelphia will be under water.

2. About the middle of the year a great number of vessels fully laden will be taken out of the ports aforesaid by a power with which we are not now at war and whose forces shall not be descried or seen.

Franklin promised that his prophecies would be explained in his next almanac, and in 1737 he set forth the following explanations:

1. The water of the sea and rivers is raised in vapors by the sun, is formed into clouds and thence descends as rain. When there is rain overhead the cities and places on the earth are certainly under water.

2. The power with which we are not at war but which it was said would take many fully laden vessels out of our ports is the wind, whose forces also are not descried coming or going.

The third prophecy, equally ingenious, did not relate so directly to weather. It announced an invasion by an army of musketeers (mosquitoes), including the assertion that "the air in this climate will agree with them so ill that toward winter they will die."

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