

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt  
but intended for use  
September 10, 1934

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 1, 1934

THREE AUTUMN MYTHS

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

Now that autumn is here, it is timely to mention three fallacies about the season that are probably accepted at face value by well over half the population of the United States and Canada.

The first is the belief that late in September, somewhere near the date of the equinox (though not necessarily on it), there always occurs an "equinoctial storm." Allowing unlimited latitude as to place, it is true that storms invariably occur at that period, but they also occur somewhere every day in the year! Considering the world as a whole, however, calm weather is decidedly more prevalent than stormy on any day, including the date of the autumnal equinox.

Second, a single, identifiable "Indian summer" is supposed to occur each autumn shortly before winter sets in. The grain of truth in this notion is that spells of calm, mild and hazy weather are characteristic of our American autumns. Most autumns bring more than one, and if you wish to call the latest one "Indian summer," there is no law to stop you.

Third, plants and animals are alleged to furnish in the autumn various "signs" of the kind of winter we are going to have. This fallacy is merely a survival of the once universal belief in omens. It is exactly on a par with the belief that breaking a mirror or meeting a black cat is a warning of misfortune.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

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