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Released upon receipt  
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Oct. 22, 1935.

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed Oct. 15, 1935

WEATHER LORE OF NORMANDY

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A book by W. Branch Johnson about the folklore of Normandy records a number of quaint and curious beliefs relating to weather. The Norman fishermen once believed that the winds dwelt together in a great palace; an idea probably borrowed from classical mythology. Wind in general is nicknamed Bonhomme Hardy; a name explained by the fact that "he likes to go about opening windows by force!" The patron saint of the wind is St. Antoine. Among the sailors of the Pays de Caux it was once customary to plunge into the sea singing soothing lullabies to the saint when they wished the wind to abate.

According to a saying on the Bay of St. Michel it is not, as people say in many other parts of the world, an old woman who is plucking her geese when it snows, but "the good God is plucking His geese to prepare them for the marriage of His daughters at Easter."

The ancient Norsemen saw in the rainbow a bridge joining heaven and earth, but their descendants in Normandy say it is the shadow of such a bridge. The sailors believe that the rainbow sucks up water from the sea and that should a boat happen to pass through the foot of the rainbow it would likewise be sucked up.

Another belief is that in lightning, and also when a sudden light breaks through a storm cloud, the Blessed Virgin may sometimes be seen. The peasants say that when a pope dies a cloud bows before the cardinal whom Heaven has chosen to succeed him.

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