

GROUNDHOG DAY

It's almost time now for a little animal to decide for us if we are to have six weeks more of winter or if spring is near at hand.

Now, the joker in all this business is this: Regardless of what the groundhog does on February 2 and whether the sun is shining or not when he comes out of his hole, we shall have six more weeks of winter, anyway.

But regardless of what the scientists say, there are many people who more than half believe the truth of the Groundhog day superstition.

One day, so runs the myth, her daughter, Persephone, was plucking flowers when she saw a narcissus of great beauty.

At last Zeus, who had arranged for the wedding of Persephone to the powerful but unpopular Lord of the Dead, sent his messenger to return her to her mother.

Somewhat the essential idea of this myth is found in the beliefs associated with Candlemas day, the name given to February 2 in the early Christian era.

Just when weather prophecy became a part of the Candlemas day tradition is unknown, but all over Christendom there persisted a belief in February 2 as a time for weather forecast.

If Candlemas Day be dry and fair, There'll be two winters in the year.

Another assures us: If Candlemas Day be dry and fair, The half o' Winter's to come and fair.

If Candlemas Day be wet and foul, The half o' Winter's gone at Yule.

A more optimistic version had it thus:

When Candlemas Day is Come and gone, The snow lies on a hot stone.

German legend also chronicles that:

Far as the sun shines on Candlemas Day, So far will the snow swirl until the May.

As for the association of the groundhog with the weather superstition, the origin of that, too is wrapped in considerable mystery.

Just why the early English settlers in America should have picked upon an animal similar to the French and Swiss marmot (for the groundhog is a species of the marmot family, one of his scientific names being Marmota Monax) for their February 2 weather prophet is not clear.

And there was the absent-minded professor who gave his finger-nails an examination and cut his class.

Danube's "Iron Gate"

The famous iron gate in the Danube is not a gate at all. That is merely the picturesque name originally given by the Turks to a narrow gorge or pass where the river has cut its way through a spur of the Transylvanian alps a few miles below Orsova in Rumania.

Paper Has Kept Growth

In the United States the history of paper is the history of the country. When the Revolutionary war broke out there was hardly enough paper available to wad the guns of the soldiers or upon which to write the orders of their officers.

Bell-Ringing Clocks

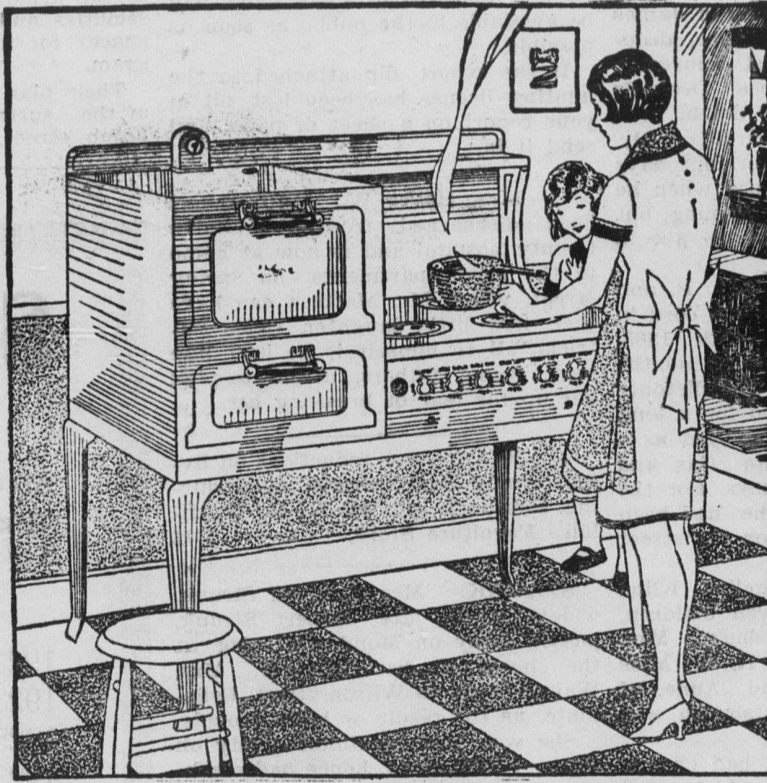
Perhaps the earliest tower clock with bell-ringing mechanism was one made by Peter Lightfoot, a monk of Glastonbury, England, about 1325.

Unbreakable Glass

The bureau of standards says that in general non-shatterable glass is of three distinct types. One of these is unusually thick; another consists of two or more layers of glass cemented together with an organic binder, such as celluloid, and the third is prepared by special heat treatment.

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The teacher gazed sorrowfully at the small boy who had stolen an apple from one of his schoolmates.

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