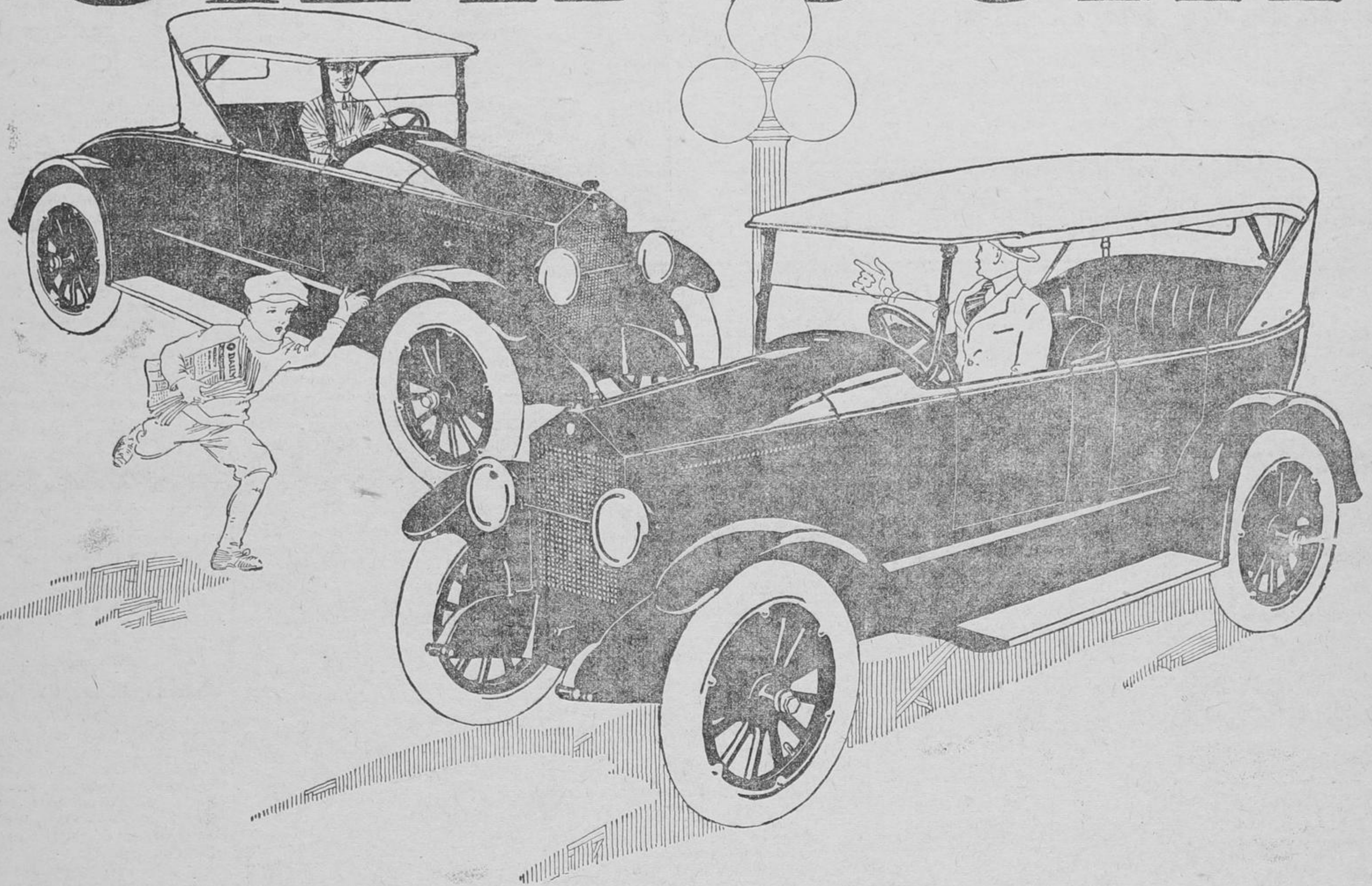


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## THE SWITHIN MYTH

The recurrence of "St. Swithin's Day" is a reminder of a superstition which is at once one of the most widespread and persistent of all, and one of the most falsely founded and obviously most foolish. There are thousands of persons who have no fear of breaking a mirror, or spilling the salt, or walking under a ladder, but condemn such superstitions as unworthy of intelligent persons, who yet seem to believe that there is something in the St. Swithin legend, and who every year, if the weather on July 16 is the same as it was on July 15, say, "See! It's coming true!"

Yet the facts are that in all the centuries since Swithin's reburial there is no record of its ever having once come true, and that almost every detail of the legend upon which it is founded is notoriously untrue. The one really interesting feature of it, and the only one worthy of serious consideration, is the number of days involved. But that, as Kipling says, is another story.

As July 15, 1921, is the 915th anniversary of the perfectly authentic removal of the remains of Bishop Swithin from the grave in the churchyard to a tomb in the nave in Winchester Cathedral, it may be worth while to recall some of the facts in the case, as contrasted with the falsehoods of the legend.

The legend is that St. Swithin was a "drunken saint," that he was buried at his own command in the churchyard with an injunction never to disturb his repose, that when long afterward impious men sought to remove his remains they were prevented by

a tremendous thunderstorm which continued for forty days, and that ever since whatever weather there is on July 15 continues for forty days thereafter.

Now for the true story, perfectly authenticated in history.

There was a Swithin, or rather Swithun—in Latin, Swithunus. He was not a "drunken" saint, but a most temperate and pious man. He was not a "saint" at all, never having been formally canonized. But he was a deacon under Bishop Elmstan, and then succeeded the latter as Bishop of Winchester, in which office he greatly distinguished himself by his piety.

He died in the year 862, and at his own wish was buried in the churchyard, at the north side of Winchester Cathedral, close to the wall and under the eaves of the building. He designated that place in order to break down a superstitious prejudice which had arisen against it, and which had made his parishioners unwilling to have any of their dead laid in that part of the grounds.

There he rested for more than a hundred years. Then the famous Archbishop Dunstan of Canterbury, aided by his friend Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester, conceived the scheme of transferring his remains to a fine tomb within the cathedral.

So, on July 15, in the year 971, by royal command of King Edgar, the remains of Swithin were transferred from the humble grave in the churchyard to a splendid tomb in the nave of the cathedral itself was named for Swithin. It had originally been called the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul.

Now, as to the thunder storm story. According to the pious monk Wolstan and other historians of that time, there was no storm at all, and no in-

terruption of the work. It was a clear and beautiful day, a vast concourse of people was in attendance, a great out-of-doors feast was held in honor of Swithin, and the whole splendid ceremonial went through without a hitch and with the apparent high favor of the elements.

Of course, such a thing as either forty days of rain or forty days without rain, is quite unknown at that time of year; at least in Winchester, or in Toronto. To demonstrate the fallacy of the prediction, note was taken at the Greenwich Observatory of the character of the weather on July 15 and the forty days following, during a period of twenty years. In six of those years St. Swithin's Day was rainy, and in the forty days following there were respectively 13, 14, 16, 18, 23 and 26 rainy days, so that in most cases the majority of the forty days, all of which should have been rainy, were in fact, rainless. In the other fourteen years St. Swithin's Day was rainless, and, of course, the forty following days should all have been rainless. But, in fact, in one year 12 of them were rainy, in one 13, in two 14 each, in two 17 each, in one 18, in one 19, in two 20 each, and in the remaining four respectively 21, 23, 29 and 31 were rainy. So the greatest number of rainy days in that forty-day period, in twenty years, followed a rainless St. Swithin's Day.

### Direct Pumping Windmill.

A windmill which pumps directly instead of through gears that has been invented in Argentina consists of a tilting vane, mounted at right angles to a frame bolted to one end of a balanced beam.

It is well enough to die happy, but it is far better to live that way.

## When Their Majesties Stroll Through Kew.

There is one place in England where the King and Queen walk free from court etiquette and attendants, yet unmolested by curious crowds, writes H. Warren in *The London Daily News*.

It is at Kew that royalty become for a while just commoners. At bluebell time every year, and once or twice during the summer when the azaleas and the rhododendrons are in bloom the King and Queen leave the state to look after itself and drive, unrecognized by most people, to the delectable gardens. There for an hour they stroll along the more secluded paths and talk to the gardeners and to one or two of the dozen artists who every season spend anxious days endeavoring to transfer to canvas or whatman board the wonderful colors of nature.

They are quite informal visits, unannounced before and unrecorded the next day in *The Court Circular*. There is no imposing reception at the entrance, such as attends a royal visit anywhere else. Indeed, it is sad that on one occasion the Queen left her car at the gate and, finding that she was not recognized by the attendants at the turnstile, paid a penny like every other visitor and walked in alone.

It is a convention that when the King and Queen pay their informal visits to Kew they do not wish to be recognized. And so, when the Queen stops to talk to a woman artist about the view or the beauty of the flowers, or to point out to Princess Mary—who is usually with her—some particularly happy transference of brilliant color from palette to picture, there is a democratic reversal of ordinary formal conditions.

As the artist usually has both her hands full of picture, palette and paint

brushes, and generally nurses her paint box on her lap, to rise and curtsey would probably cause as much embarrassment to the royal visitor as to the painter. So they chat pleasantly to each other, the artist sitting and going on with her work and the Queen standing by her side. And, after a few minutes the Queen, with a friendly "Good morning," passes on.

The famous "Hindenburg" wooden statue, which was to be covered by admirers with nails at a small charge each, was recently advertised for sale as firewood.

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