

Weather Prophecy in Missouri.

A Missourian left the pulpit to become a weather prophet. He made a competency by publishing his forecasts in an almanac but refused a great fortune offered by speculators for the exclusive use of his foreknowledge.

"Ah, my boy," the Rev. Irl R. Hicks said to a reporter in 1908, when he had won his reputation as a forecaster, "if I went into a thing of that sort, if I should prostitute in that way the gifts that God has given me, God would trip me up. No, no, I could not stultify myself in that way. I believe in the eternal verities. Not for all the money in the universe would I sell myself out. I say to all who offer to pay me big money for exclusive information, 'if you've looked into my work and satisfied yourself of its value, pay me for my almanac and you'll get as much as if you paid me a million dollars.' I do not wish to make even a dollar by wrong methods. I have a nice home for my family and a comfortable living and that is all I want."

One of the offers came from a representative of a Boston syndicate, speculating in wheat, corn, cotton and other commodities. This man told Mr. Hicks that the syndicate had followed his predictions for a year and had learned that if they had based their trades on those predictions they would have cleared ~~many~~

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millions. "He offered me a tremendous sum if I would stop publishing my weather forecasts and would give his syndicate the exclusive information."

Based on certain movements of the heavenly bodies, conjunctions of the planets and like formulas worked out by himself through thirty years of study and experiment, Mr. Hicks made up his forecasts at the end of one year for all of the following year. He never studied astronomy or meteorology in the schools, but "learned by reading and observation, mostly by observation." The United States weather bureau experts scoffed at what they called Hicks' "pretensions," but this Missouri prophet kept on with his almanac gaining followers until his profits enabled him to buy an abandoned church and set up his own publishing house.

"Many men of large affairs," he once said, "have found commercial value in my predictions, Armour for instance. Not long ago I had a letter from him saying he depended on my almanac largely for his foreknowledge of weather conditions. He said he had a number of high-grade cattle to bring from Scotland and he asked me to tell him in advance when there would be a calm period for shipping them. I did so, and he landed safely in Halifax, after a calm passage."