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Letter From Elsie M. Smith to Alfred L. Shoemaker, February 24, 1949

Elsie M. Smith

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Lembertsville, Pa., Feb 24, '49.

To Dr. Shoemaker:-

Indeed
There are more of our
beliefs or sayings. Maybe a few have to
be taken with a grain of salt, but that
only makes them more interesting. About
a week ago I had send others. There
was a badly misspelled word & such an
easy one too making it the more horrible.
But that is what one does sometimes when
one tries to write as fast as one thinks.

Those weather predictions my grand
mother always used so don't think I
just made them up. I have also noticed
that different localities have just a
slightly different version of the same.
You see we are 3 different kinds of Pa.
Dutch. The Moravians of Schuylk Co. The
Sutheran of Berks Co & The Amish of Lan-
caster Co. Lots of people used to think
the Amish were the only Pa. Dutch. I
guess it was because those are the
only ones they could pick out in regards
to their dress. Here are some more of the
sayings of my grandmother.

To test air in wells or mines use a
lighted candle if it goes out do not enter
as there is not enough air, as she used
to say, to live. Some also used a bird
if it died the air was too impure.

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Lots of snow + ice clinging to trees + bushes, the following year will be very fruitful.

If a black cat crosses your path it means bad luck.

Do not walk under a ladder, it also brings bad luck.

If 2 wash out of one water, they will fight.

Burn bread or other food in stove at times, to feed lost souls.

If you spill salt, you will get into a fight.

To test if snow goes away by sun or rain, my grandmother used to make a snow ball, then hold a lighted match or candle under it. If it drips it goes away by rain, if it don't drip it goes away by sun.

If you open an umbrella in house you will have bad luck.

If you sweep out after sun down you will sweep all your luck out.

If snow falls in big flakes, it snows for the rich.

If snow flakes are small, it snows for the poor.

If you have a sunny + warm day in winter it will bring snow.

When you comb your hair + someone

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out burn it, if the birds get it to build their nest you will have lots of headache.

Eggs laid on Good Fri. are very good to eat. If you eat them you will have good health for the following year.

To find a 4 leaf clover means good luck.

If a girl likes cats & dogs, she will like her husband, if she gets one.

Do not sew on a census day or else lightning will strike in it.

Do not sew on clothing while wearing them, if you do you will sew your thoughts fast & can't think.

A girl who whistles makes the angles cry.

Do not clean between Xmas & New Years.

When the moon is full, there will be a change of weather.

Weather on last Friday of month will predict weather for following month.

To get rid of freckles, go out on way 1st in early morn go in wheat field without speaking & without any clothes, wash in dew & slap freckles where you want them.

If the first snake you see in spring is a dead one, you will have bad luck.

If first snake is a live one, good luck.

If a baby girl is born, the cloth put on navel is saved after it comes off & kept until little girl is old enough to

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saw, let her do her first spring on it &
she will become a good seamstress.

When you hear the first call of the
whippoorwill in spring, roll you self
& you will not get a headache.

When you hear the first call of the
whippoorwill in spring, shake your
purse & it will always have money
in it the following year. The harder you
shake it, the more money.

When you dress & get a piece of cloth
ing on inside out, do not change it &
you will rec. a ~~present~~ gift.

When the first hail storm comes eat
a few hail & you won't have toothache.

When one has hiccoughs drink 3
big swallows of water all in one breath
& it stops, if not scare a person by
asking him or her what they stole.

If you chew too much birch bark it
will thin your blood & your nose will bleed.

In case you ever see a ghost if it
is white it is harmless, if it is black
it is harmful. Only some people can
see a ghost.

If a negro kisses a baby it will not
get whooping cough.

Do not eat a double egg by yourself
if you do you will have turns, if you

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share it you will not have it.

If right eye itches, do not rub it & you will see someone or something you like.

If left eye itches, rub it, if you do not, you will see someone or something you do not like.

If the hearing of your right ear dings very suddenly, you will hear something you like to hear. Or someone will be saying something pleasant.

If the hearing of your left ear dings very suddenly, you will hear something good of you. Or someone will speak.

If you want to shoot a witch use a silver bullet or else you can't hit it.

If a witch tries to bewitch you, swear a blue streak & she can't get at you.

If muskrats build tall houses it is a sure sign of a long & cold winter. The higher the houses are the higher the water will get when it thaws.

These are all for now. When I can think of others I will send them in. You see it is quite a job I have to do. I have to remember them in Pa. Dutch. Trans.

late them in English + write them down
So if I have a few mistakes in English
blame it on the Pa Dutch as lots of
things will not make sense if trans-
lated into English, if it is said in
English it just isn't perfect English.

I have thought of all of these saying
one night while I couldn't sleep. They
seemed to come faster than I could write
them down. I was surprised there were
so many.

Lots of luck to you in your work.

Respectfully yours,
Elsie M. Smith,
Lehartsville,
Pa.

P.S. I hope you can read my writing. It
used to be rather good until I studied
shorthand. Then speed counted and
good penmanship vanished.