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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A PROBLEM IN OCEAN CLIMATOLOGY

Climatic data for the oceans, as well as those for the land, are put to an endless variety of uses. A very unusual application of marine climatic data was recently brought to the notice of the United States Weather Bureau.

The master of a British steamer wrote to the Bureau, stating that his vessel had loaded with asphalt at Trinidad and was on her way toward the British Isles, touching at Newport News. It was necessary to keep the cargo at a temperature of about 100 degrees Fahrenheit by means of steam from the boilers. The question arose whether it would be better to follow a direct great circle course from the Virginia Capes to Liverpool or to take a more southerly route, which would, of course, require more time for the voyage, but, as both air and water temperatures would be higher than on the northern route, would take less steam from the boilers to maintain the asphalt at the required temperature.

In response to this appeal, the Weather Bureau prepared charts showing the normal air and water temperatures over a large part of the Atlantic for the four seasons of the year. On the basis of these charts it was expected that the captain could be able to figure out the relative amounts of fuel required to keep the cargo at 100 degrees on the two routes under consideration and could thus decide which route was the more economical.

What use was made of the data has not been reported.

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