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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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MAGICAL CONTROL OF THE WINDS

In the year 1857, one of the crew of the British ship "Ruby Castle" was murdered at sea. The murderer, being brought to trial in England, pleaded that the murdered man was a Finn, and, having the power to raise storms, was a danger to the ship. Cases are recorded, also from the nineteenth century, in which, when vessels met persistent head winds, a Finn among the crew was put in irons by the captain and otherwise harshly treated until the wind changed for the better.

In the old folklore of the sea the power of controlling the winds has been ascribed especially, though not exclusively, to the Finns and the Lapps. According to Olaus Magnus, the Finlanders once drove a profitable trade in the sale of winds to mariners. After being paid, they made three magical knots. The buyer was told that when he untied the first he would have a good breeze; when the second, a strong wind; and when the third, a severe tempest. The same writer tells us of Eric, King of Sweden, known as Windy Cap, who could change the direction of the wind by turning his cap around on his head.

Sir Walter Scott, in his notes to "The Pirate," gives an account of one Bessie Miller, living in the Orkneys in 1814, who sold winds to sailors. John Sutter, of Cornwall, plied the same trade as recently as 1861.

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