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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SOME NAUTICAL WEATHER SUPERSTITIONS

A recently published account of the superstitions cherished by Scottish sailors mentions several relating to the winds and the weather. If a Scottish sea captain, we are told, meets a pig before he reaches the wharf he does not like to sail that day, no matter how favorable the weather may be, believing that if he does so he will encounter head-winds throughout the voyage. If he takes live pigs on board for use as fresh meat, he will always save one until the voyage is ended, believing that if he meets head-winds and sacrifices the pig the wind will immediately shift to the right quarter.

The pig must be killed with its tail in the direction from which the wind is desired, while the hoofs, tail and entrails are thrown overboard to propitiate Neptune, so that he may not raise a heavy sea in case the wind blows hard when it changes. After the pig is killed and handed over to the cook, if the winds are still stubborn, the captain throws a piece of silver over the side. One canny Scot is said to have drilled a hole in a sixpence and tied a string to it, so that he could recover it every time he cast it in the sea. One day, however, a shark snapped it up before he could haul it in.

A white dog and a black cat on a ship at the same time are believed to bring squally weather throughout the voyage.

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