

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A RHYMING WEATHER GUIDE

The unique example of a manual of weather information for sailors written entirely in verse was published at Calcutta in 1879. It is entitled "The Sailor's East Indian Sky Interpreter and Weather Book; Being a Description of the Phenomena and Prognostics of the Bay of Bengal October Cyclones, as Experienced at the Pilot Station off the Mouth of the Hooghly," and was composed by S.R. Elson, licensed Hooghly pilot. This curious production, a booklet of 27 pages, sets forth the best philosophy of storms available at the time it was written and offers a fund of practical advice to the mariner concerning the cyclones mentioned in the title. The meter is that of "The Night Before Christmas." Here is a sample:

For avoiding the center the best plan will be
So to trim all your sails that your ship may run free

With the wind on her starboard side, always abeam;
Both for ships under canvas alone or with steam;

For, except you have little sea-room for your craft,
There is danger in bringing the wind farther aft.

More especially if you are in the storm's track,
For the rule is to count, with the wind at your back,

Say, four points to your left, to find how it should bear;
Thus your leeway and drift leave you nothing to spare.

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