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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE HORSE LATITUDES

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The regions of calms and variable winds coinciding with the broken belts of high barometric pressure lying on the poleward borders of the trade-wind belts, in subtropical latitudes, were called by Maury the "calms of Cancer" and the "calms of Capricorn"; the former name applying to the northern hemisphere, the latter to the southern. An older name for these regions, also used by Maury, is "horse latitudes." A good many writers, however, apply the latter name only to the portion of the northern belt that lies over the Atlantic Ocean, or more specifically to the portion near Bermuda.

The most familiar explanation of the name "horse latitudes" is that, in the old sailing days, vessels laden with horses were often becalmed here so long that the animals had to be thrown overboard; but other explanations have been offered, including the following one: British sailors formerly received a month's advance pay before leaving port and this had to be worked off during the first month at sea. To celebrate the expiration of the period an empty tar barrel known to sailors as the "dead horse" was hoisted to the end of the fore-yard arm and dipped into the sea. This often happened in the region above mentioned and may - or may not - be the real origin of the expression above mentioned.

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