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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE SATURDAY MOON

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

There is an English weather proverb that:

"A Saturday moon,
If it comes once in seven years, comes once too soon."

Also, one from Worcestershire:

"If the moon on a Saturday be new or full,
There always was rain, and there always will."

This notion is discussed at some length by John Westwood Oliver in an old number of Longman's Magazine, who says:

"One of the most curious, and certainly one of the most widespread, of all weather beliefs is that of the 'Saturday moon.' The notion is that when the new moon falls on a Saturday it is invariably followed by a period of wet and unsettled weather. The currency of this belief is remarkably wide. Not only is it found (more or less modified) in the folk-lore of England, Scotland, and Ireland, but it is held also by seamen of all nationalities. A traveler relates that he once heard it referred to by a Chinese pilot. And more than this, in 1848, a Dr. Forster announced to the Royal Astronomical Society, as the result of an examination of weather registers kept by his grandfather, his father and himself, extending over nearly eighty years, that nineteen times out of twenty a new moon on Saturday was followed by twenty days of rain and wind."

Dr. Forster's statement is an illustration of the fact that you can prove anything by statistics. Of all the foolish beliefs ascribing a relation between lunar phases and weather, surely the most foolish of all are those that attach significance to the day of the week on which one of these phases falls.

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