

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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"PROTESTANT" AND "POPISH" WINDS

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Authority on Meteorology.

The other day I came across a reference to the "protestant wind," and eventually discovered an explanation of the term in F.M. Misson's "Memoirs and Observations in his Travels over England," published in London in 1719. The author was a French protestant, who settled in England after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and whose descriptions of his adopted country were praised by Addison. It appears that shortly before James II was driven from the English throne it became customary in London to call the east wind "protestant," as favoring the invasion of William of Orange, and a wind from the opposite direction "popish," as an obstacle to his arrival. Misson tells us that on October 23, 1688, "James II, being extremely restless and uneasy, ordered a weathercock to be placed where he might see it from his apartment, that he might learn by his own eyes whether the wind is protestant or popish."

On October 30, the king received false news to the effect that Prince William's fleet had been dispersed, and remarked laughing, to the French ambassador: "At last, then, the wind has declared itself a papist." Later in the same day a less cheerful report arrived, and on November 1, says Misson, "the weathercock points a northeast wind and the consternation increases; at this moment William goes on board again." Four days later the Prince of Orange landed with his army.

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