

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 1, 1934

THE "DOCTOR"

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On some tropical and subtropical coasts the sea breeze is called "the doctor," on account of its invigorating and health-giving qualities. This nickname dates back at least as far as the first half of the eighteenth century, as a history of Jamaica published in 1740 mentions it as being then in common use in that island. A recent writer tells us that Jamaicans call the land breeze "the undertaker," as an appropriate antonym of "doctor."

There are other regions where the latter name is not applied to the ordinary diurnal sea breeze, which alternates with the nocturnal land breeze, but to some other common wind supposed to be beneficial to the health. Thus at St. Helena a stiff southeast trade wind accompanied by rain is believed to sweep impurities from the air of the island and is termed "the parish doctor." On the South African coast a strong southeaster is known as "the doctor," or "the Cape doctor." These names are said to have been introduced by Anglo-Indians in the days when they used Cape Colony as a sanatorium in which to recuperate from the effects of the Indian climate. On the coast of Guinea, according to H.W. Braby, the harmattan is called "the doctor," because "it is, generally speaking, health-giving."

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