

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt  
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April 10, 1935

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed April 3, 1935

MOON AND WEATHER

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Authority on Meteorology

According to the late Lord Kelvin there is at least one local exception to the meteorological dogma that the moon has no appreciable influence on the weather. In a lecture on tides, delivered about half a century ago, he said:

"There is one very interesting point I said I would endeavour to speak of if I had time; I have not time, but still I must speak of it -- the influence of the moon on the weather. 'We almost laugh when we hear of the influence of the moon on the weather,' Sir F. Evans said to me, 'but still there is an influence.' Gales of wind are remarkably prevalent in Torres Straits and the neighbourhood about the time of new and full moon. This was noticed by Dr. Rattray, a surgeon in the navy, in connexion with observations made by the surveying ship 'Fly' during the three years 1841-44. Dr. Rattray noticed that at those times there was a large area of coral reef uncovered at the very low water of the spring tides, extending out some 60 or 70 miles from the land. This large area becomes highly heated, and the great heating of that large portion of land gives rise to gales at the full and change, that is, at the new and full moon. This indirect effect of the moon upon the weather through the tides is exceedingly interesting, but it does not at all invalidate the scientific conclusion that there is no direct influence, and the general effect of the moon on the weather -- the changes in the moon and the changes in the weather and their supposed connexion -- remains a mere chimera."

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