

CHATS WITH THE WEATHER MAN.

Friday, April 12, 1930

ANNOUNCEMENT: Here is our old friend, Ob. Server! -- He is going to tell us some more about the work of our U.S. Weather Bureau. Every two weeks, he has a little chat with the weather experts and then tells us about it. Last time, you remember, he told us something about the Bureau's forecast service to men at sea ----- Sit down, Mr. Observer? ----- What's the good word today?

Well, whatever the weather is, it is soon gone. Some windy old salt might hang a good story on a big storm at sea last year. But I guess most you folks consider last year's weather, or last month's weather, or even last week's weather as a thing of the past. And as for the fact that on a certain day, six months ago the weather, in a certain part of the ocean, on the other side of the world, was not at all unusual -----well, you might consider that an absolutely useless thing to know.

Maybe that is because you haven't talked to Mr. F. B. Tingley, who is in charge of the Marine Division of the U. S. Weather Bureau. He could show you that past weather often has a future to it.

Mr. Tingley's division gets reports from some 1,400 ships sailing in all parts of the seven seas. Those ships take observations of the weather every day of each voyage they make. The readings of the barometer and other weather instruments are recorded day by day on a special form supplied by the U. S. Weather Bureau and then sent in at the end of the voyage or whenever convenient. The reporting ships include American, British, Dutch, German, French, Italian and others, many of which never enter a United States port. This reporting is altogether voluntary on the part of the ship-masters, U.S. Weather Bureau representatives at the various ports make arrangements for this cooperation directly with the ship masters regardless of the flag under which they sail.

From these reports, statisticians of the Bureau work out the average weather conditions at various seasons and times of the month in different parts of the oceans all over the world. From these reports, the Marine Division's experts can tell what the weather was on any day in the past in most any part of the oceans.

You might say, "What do they want to know for?"

Well, claims for insurance and salvage and the like are all the time coming up in the admiralty courts. A certificate from the Marine Division of the U.S. Weather Bureau as to what the weather was at a certain place at a certain time may often settle the case.

For instance, in one case the cargo of a sailing vessel was damaged when the ship reached port. The shippers sued for damages. They claimed the damage was due to the vessel being unseaworthy. The skipper claimed that he had run

into a tropical hurricane, so the loss was beyond his control. The records of the nearest land stations on either side of the position given by the captain did not show a tropical hurricane on that date. Through its ship reports, however, the Weather Bureau was able to testify that there really had been a small tropical hurricane in those waters at that time.

In another case a vessel carrying a cargo of coal from Europe to the United States during the coal strike a few years ago failed to reach port until after the strike had been settled. The cargo was worth very much less than it would have been had the vessel made a voyage of the usual length. A damage claim resulted and the weather records played a prominent part in the legal proceedings.

Every year a few vessels fail to reach port and are numbered among the missing ships. Some disappearances, like that of the *CYCLOPS* during the World War, have attracted a great deal of public attention and resulted in much speculation as to the cause of the loss. Nearly always the Weather Bureau is called upon for the record of the weather probably encountered by the missing vessel. Most ships that disappear are lost as a result of severe storms.

On the other hand, the fact that the weather was good at a certain date may be highly important in settling disputes about salvage and the like. For instance, if a ship is stranded and the salvage company works day and night to get it off and puts in a claim for overtime, as it were, the question of how much danger there was from the weather may be important to the court in fixing the amount to be allowed for salvage.

The records of the U.S. Weather Bureau are our only authoritative source of information on such past weather and their certificates are accepted as evidence by the courts. However, that is only one of the many uses of these records of the world's sea weather. Those averages worked out from those reports are published on the U.S. Hydrographic Office pilot charts of the oceans and are a general weather guide highly regarded by mariners all over the world.

One set of weather averages, published in those monthly charts of the different oceans, shows the average number of gales each month in all parts of the seas of the world. From those records, the map of the oceans of the world has been marked off in zones of relative calmness and storminess. Those zones form the basis for part of the load-line regulations to be put into effect next September on all American ships by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

As Mr. Tingley explains, the depth at which any ship can safely be loaded is chiefly a question of the build of the ship and the weather it may encounter. Many countries already have regulations for keeping the load within the proper limits. Now the United States is going to require its ships to observe load-line rules. If the ship enters a stormy zone it will be required to carry a lighter load than is permitted in a zone of comparative calm. Many marine interests, including ship-owners, insurance companies, and shippers, will be affected in a very practical way.

So you see these records of past storms live long after the wind has died down. And they are not only valuable in settling cases at law, and in regulating shipping, but furnish the scientists data which may aid in working

out more of the ways of the weather.

One of the most violent storms on record occurred in the **North Atlantic** last winter, according to the Marine Division's reports. Some meteorologists suspect that unusually warm water swept north in the Gulf Stream may have been largely responsible for the intensity of the storm. They think that the reports from the source of such a current might prove valuable in forecasting weather conditions far ahead. As reports of surface temperatures are included in the innumerable records from ships, many such secrets may be hidden in the files of the U.S. Weather Bureau.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Old Ob Server has just told^{us} something of his visit with Mr. F. G. Tingley in charge of the Marine Division of the U.S. Weather Bureau. These chats with the Weather Man are a regular feature presented every other Friday by Station ----- in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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