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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 27, 1926

By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University

THE DOLDRUMS

Between the trade winds of the northern and southern hemispheres lies a troublesome belt of equatorial calms and squalls known as the doldrums. The word "doldrum" seems to be derived either from the old English "dold", meaning stupid, or the Portuguese "dolorio", tormenting. Sailing vessels from Europe to South America sometimes used to be delayed for days in crossing these calms. At other times, the fair steady trade winds would invade the doldrums and carry them nearly all the way across without difficulty.

The doldrums shift back and forth, following the sun in its seasonal progress, but lagging a month or two behind. Thus in August they are farthest north, perhaps extending from latitude 10 to 15 degrees, and in February farthest south, lying close to the equator. They are most marked on the eastern side of the Atlantic and Pacific.

The doldrums are characterized by low pressure, high temperature and high humidity, intermittent calms and squalls and very frequent rains. Indeed in some months, if the day is divided into six 4-hour periods rain will occur in about half of these periods. When the doldrums are farthest from the equator they become the breeding ground for tropical cyclones.

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SCIENCE SERVICE,
21st and B Sts.,
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