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A SCIENCE SERVICE FEATURE

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WINDS WANTED LINDBERGH TO PARIS

Lindbergh studied weather maps to good advantage before he embarked on his audacious transatlantic flight. The take-off was admirably timed to make the best of exceptionally favorable winds through nearly the whole of the journey. Thursday night, May 19, before the start, a long oval of high barometric pressure stretched clear across the ocean a little to the southward of the flier's great-circle route. Around such a pressure system the winds blow "clockwise," which meant the right direction to speed him on his journey. Off Newfoundland, Friday evening, he ran into a sleet storm along the border of a strongly developed low lying to the northward of his route, but the winds were still westerly and must have been of considerable force. In mid-Atlantic he appears to have passed through a small area of light variable winds, but he soon came within the influence of a pronounced low, which, with center north of the British Isles, was bordered on the southward by strong westerly winds, just where Lindbergh wanted them.

In the present stage of aircraft development, strong head winds are fatal to the success of a transatlantic flight. Such winds may be encountered in flying in either direction, but the general drift of the atmosphere in middle latitudes is from west to east, and there is a decided preponderance of westerly winds, especially at great altitudes. Thus flying from America to Europe is a much more hopeful undertaking than flying in the opposite direction.
