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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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OCEAN WEATHER DATA IN THE LAW COURTS

For many years the United States Weather Bureau has been collecting weather reports from all parts of the oceans. These are supplied to the Bureau in the shape of "meteorological logs", kept by seamen of all nationalities during their voyages.

The data thus gathered, apart from their scientific value, are used for a number of practical purposes. They are frequently called for by lawyers for use as evidence in admiralty cases. For example, it is sometimes necessary to show the character of the weather experienced throughout an entire voyage, when a vessel has failed to maintain a contract speed or to land a cargo by a specified date. Again, the information may relate to a single storm in which damage was sustained during a comparatively brief period.

Occasionally the information requested relates to missing ships, the fate of which can sometimes be determined with a high degree of probability from a knowledge of the weather prevailing at the time and place of disappearance. Just after the World War a number of claims for the loss of ships at sea came before the various claims commissions, in which it was desired to establish whether the loss should be classed as a war casualty or a weather casualty. Records furnished by the Weather Bureau helped to settle many such cases.

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