

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt
but intended for use
November 18, 1927

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed November 11, 1927

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Authority on Meteorology

MAURY'S WIND AND CURRENT CHARTS

The father of marine meteorology was Lieut. Matthew Fontaine Maury, of the United States Navy, and the greatest of his achievements was the preparation, from the logbooks and reports of a host of marine observers, of the celebrated "Wind and Current Charts," showing the average winds and currents for each month on all parts of the ocean. These charts revolutionized navigation.

By utilizing the information they contained, mariners were able to reduce the average time of a sailing voyage between the Atlantic and Pacific ports of the United States by forty days. The money value of the charts to vessels sailing from the United States to South America and the Far East was estimated at \$2,250,000 per annum. British shipping on all seas is said to have benefited to the extent of \$10,000,000 per annum. Neither was the utility of the charts limited to the saving of money. The following episode is cited in Maury's biography:

"When the 'San Francisco', with hundreds of United States troops on board, foundered in an Atlantic hurricane, and the rumor reached port that she was in need of help, everyone looked to Maury as the only man in the country who could tell where to find the drifting wreck. To him the Secretary of the Navy sent for information. He at once set to work and showed how the wind and currents acting upon the helpless wreck would combine to drift her 'just here,' pointing to a spot on the chart, and making a cross mark with the blue pencil he held in his hand. Just there the relief was sent, and just there the survivors of the wreck were picked up."

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