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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WHAT IS A HABUB?

A full page of pictures published in the illustrated London News last winter showed successive stages in the passage of a great sandstorm over the town of Khartoum, in the Sudan, and the accompanying text described the storm as a "habub". The storms known under this name (which is also spelled "haboob", "haboub" and "hubbub") are common in the northern and central Sudan, particularly during the rainy season, May to October. Though far larger than the whirling columns of sand and dust known as "devils" that are frequently seen in this desert region and others, habubs are relatively small storms. The dense cloud of sand, sometimes more than 3,000 feet in height, advances swiftly along a front of 12 to 18 miles, and its passage occupies from half an hour to several hours. The wind is at times strong enough to do some damage to buildings and to capsize small river steamers.

According to L.J. Sutton, habubs vary in color, according to the nature of the surface over which they pass. Those that approach Khartoum from the north are generally black and dirty, as they pass over cultivated land. Those coming from regions where the surface is mainly sand are usually yellowish in color, but the sun's rays sometimes impart brilliant colors to the masses of sand. Habubs are especially prevalent in the vicinity of Khartoum, where they average about 20 a year.

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