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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DUST HAZE AT SEA

A large area of the North Atlantic Ocean, extending from the African coast far to the westward of the Cape Verde Islands, was known to the early mariners as the Sea of Darkness, because of the frequent occurrence there of a dense haze, now known to be due to dust brought by the trade winds from the Sahara. Haze is commonest in this region during the first four months of the year.

One of the most remarkable cases on record occurred in February, 1898, over an area extending at least 1,500 miles north and south and a great but unknown distance east and west. The haze was caused by red dust, so fine that it was impossible to sweep it up from the decks of ships, yet so dense that the sun and stars were completely obscured for two days. The sun when visible was generally red, but one observer described it as "a perfect blue ball," and another as greenish. At Teneriffe the occurrence was preceded by a strong and very hot southerly wind, but during the haze the air was calm.

Many vessels were delayed by this haze. One, which left Teneriffe February 15, was two days and three nights before arriving at Las Palmas.

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