

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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TRADE-WIND CLOUDS

The last journey of that inveterate "weather-hunter," Prof. R. DeC. Ward, was made last summer to the West Indies, and an interesting account of his experiences has been published since the author's death. He describes, among other things, the ever-changing panorama of the clouds in the trade-wind belt:

"There are those wonderfully bright days when the blue skies are dotted with typical trade cumuli, their tall columnar forms leaning over to leeward, their tops breaking off and drifting away, dissolving as they go, and being replaced by new tops. There are days when conditions favor more active cloud growth, when cumulo-nimbus is the characteristic cloud form, when the skies are darker, when there are brief showers accompanied by slight squall winds - almost typical doldrum conditions. There are also dull days, when the skies are gray, and one is reminded of overcast days at home; and there are days when the sky is clear from morning to night. Surely, the sea traveler with his eyes open should never complain of monotony in the trades. These variations in the types of clouds and in the amounts of cloudiness are puzzling, in view of the fact that the air temperatures, the relative humidities, and the wind direction and velocity observed on board ship do not vary appreciably on days of widely different cloud conditions. The explanation is doubtless to be found in varying conditions aloft. The writer has spent, in all, several weeks in the trades, in North and South Atlantic, North and South Pacific, and in the Indian Ocean, and he has never failed to find interest and variety in the ever-changing cloud forms. On this voyage he was again impressed by the growth of the trade cumulus and rudimentary cumulo-nimbus in the later afternoons and early evenings, often to the shower stage. These growing cloud tops, illuminated by the setting sun, are beautiful to watch."

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