

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

MARINE METEOROLOGY

That it behooves a sailor to be weather-wise has always been admitted, but there was a time, almost within the memory of men now living, when neither seamen nor landmen had the remotest conception of the benefits that a systematic study of the meteorology of the sea was capable of conferring upon the maritime world. The man who first grasped the importance of such a study and translated his ideas into facts was the American naval officer, Lieutenant Matthew Fontaine Maury.

During his brief career at sea Maury became impressed with the meagerness of the information then available concerning the winds and currents that aid or hinder the voyages of ships; especially sailing ships. When, in consequence of an accident that incapacitated him for shipboard duties, he was assigned to service in Washington, he began to explore the old logs of naval vessels, filed in the Navy Department, for notes on meteorological conditions, and eventually developed a plan of securing regular observations from both the Navy and the merchant marine. The results of this undertaking was the publication of the famous Wind and Current Charts, which revolutionized navigation throughout the world.

A further outcome of Maury's undertaking was the holding, at his suggestion, and by invitation of the United States Government, of an International Maritime Conference, which met at Brussels in 1853 and worked out a world-wide plan for meteorological observations at sea.

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21st and Constitution Ave.
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