

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed August 31, 1932

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

VOLCANIC DUST EFFECTS

Observers in various parts of the world continue to report atmospheric manifestations attributable to the dust spread aloft by the volcanic outbreak of last April in the Andes. Supplementing a recent "Why the Weather?" note concerning the sky glows seen in South Africa and New Zealand in the weeks following the eruption, here is a statement, dated July 14, from his majesty's astronomer at the Cape of Good Hope, H. Spencer Jones:

"The first sunset glow due to volcanic dust from the Andean eruption was seen in Cape Town on April 21. The glow, which was of remarkable intensity, started about fifteen minutes after sunset and lasted fully an hour, the color being a deep fiery red. There were many inquiries that evening at the 'Cape Times' office and at the Central Fire Station whether a large fire was raging in the suburbs. There were also numerous telephonic inquiries at the Royal Observatory as to the cause of the phenomenon. I therefore gave a statement to the 'Cape Times' attributing the phenomenon to volcanic dust from the Andean eruption, and anticipating that it would be followed by sunrise and sunset glows for several weeks. The glows have continued to be visible in Cape Town up to the present time, eight weeks since the appearance of the first glow, with varying but on the whole decreasing intensity. The effects appear to have been even more striking in the clear air of the high veldt than here. At Mafeking, one month after the appearance of the first glow, a trustworthy observer stated that the glow was of a fire-red color, stretching right across the sky, even long after darkness."

Prof. Carl Stoermer, the well-known authority on the aurora, reports the observation of "noctilucent clouds" in Norway on the nights of July 10-11 and July 24-25 and his photographic measurements indicate heights comparable to those of auroral displays (60 or 70 miles). He thinks these clouds consisted of dust from the Andean outbreak.

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