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October 5, 1933

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed September 28, 1933

CLOUDS IN THE TRADE WINDS

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The weather is usually fine in the two trade-wind belts, the northeast and the southeast trades. These lie on either side of the equatorial "doldrums," which are famous for calms varied with squalls, for clouds and rain, and for muggy, oppressive weather. The trades have their clouds, but they are mainly detached masses of the type known as "trade cumulus," with plenty of blue sky between them.

"The peculiarity of these clouds," says a recent British description, "is that the upper part is usually inclined obliquely to the flat base. In some cases the cumuli are of considerable size while at other times they are small. Often they degenerate into small dome-shaped or lens-shaped masses. Generally these clouds cover a comparatively small extent of the area of the sky, but not infrequently a thin hard broken strato-cumulus extends over the sky with such regularity that, when seen in perspective near the horizon, it presents the appearance of a series of bars. Such clouds are often called 'roll cumulus.' The clouds die away in the evening, and at night the sky is usually cloudless. Trade cumulus is formed at relatively low heights, from about 500 to 2,000 feet."

Moderate squalls, accompanied by a little rain and small shifts of wind direction, are not unknown in the trade-wind regions, but they are not associated with heavy clouds.

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