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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed November 22, 1933

"WHIRLIES"

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Small whirlwinds take a variety of shapes. Some of them form columns of dust, sand or snow. Others are made visible by blowing aloft dead leaves, bits of paper and other miscellaneous objects. The waterspout is a whirlwind made visible by cloud and spray. Lastly, a good many whirlwinds are invisible. The explorers of Sir Douglas Mawson's antarctic expedition of 1911-14 gave the name "whirlies" to the very violent small whirlwinds they observed in Adelie Land. Mawson says of them, in "The Home of the Blizzard":

"The whirlies tracked about in a most irregular manner and woe bētide any light object which came in their path. The velocity of the wind in the rotating column being very great, a corresponding lifting power was imparted to it. As an illustration of this force it may be mentioned that the lid of the air tractor case had been left lying on the snow near the Hut. It weighed more than three hundred-weight, yet it was whisked into the air one morning and dropped 50 yards away. An hour afterward it was picked up again and returned to its original position, this time striking the rocks with such force that part of it was shivered to pieces. The radius of activity of these whirlies was strictly limited; objects in their path only being disturbed. For instance, Laseron one day was skinning at one end of a seal and remained in perfect calm, while McClean, at the other extremity, was on the edge of a furious vortex. Traveling over the sea the whirlies displayed fresh capabilities. Columns of brash-ice, frozen spray and water vapor were frequently seen lifted to heights of from 200 to 400 feet, simulating waterspouts."

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