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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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NORTH ATLANTIC WATERSPOUTS

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Some interesting statistics concerning the distribution of waterspouts over the North Atlantic have just been published in Germany. They were compiled partly from a series of volumes published by the Deutsche Seewarte, in Hamburg, recording the results of weather observations taken on German and Dutch ships during the years 1868 to 1893, inclusive, and partly from the meteorological logbooks collected at the Seewarte during the period 1901-1933. The enumeration includes, in addition to waterspouts in the ordinary sense of the term, attended by a visible column of cloud, a number of local whirlwinds lacking this feature, but upwards of 90 per cent were of the former class.

The total number of whirls of both kinds was 476. Exactly half of these were seen during the six months October to March, inclusive, and half during the other six months of the year. The most remarkable fact disclosed by this record is that, contrary to the general impression of meteorologists, waterspouts are decidedly commoner over the temperate zone of the Atlantic between latitudes 30 and 50 degrees North than over tropical waters. They are more numerous on the western side of the ocean than on the eastern. The largest number recorded in any 10-degree square of latitude and longitude was 56 in the square bounded by the parallels of 30 and 40 degrees North and the meridians of 60 and 70 degrees West and the next largest number was found in the adjacent square to the westward. Both of these squares include portions of the Gulf Stream.

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