

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt  
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February 21, 1935

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed Feb. 14, 1935

CORPOSANTS AT SEA

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Authority on Meteorology

High mountains are the favorite haunt of corposants, alias St. Elmo's fire. Displays of this phenomenon are far less common on the ocean, though most of the folklore and non-scientific literature relating to it has a nautical setting. Some idea of its comparative rarity at sea may be obtained from an analysis made at the Deutsche Seewarte, in Hamburg, of the meteorological logs of sailing-ships reporting to that institution during the year 1884 and 1885. Among 77,300 daily records of weather observations taken on all parts of the ocean there were 164 that reported displays of St. Elmo's fire. In all but 33 cases the displays were attended by thunder and lightning, and in nearly all cases by rain, snow or hail. No cases were observed in the trade-wind belts, which are, moreover, almost entirely free from thunderstorms.

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