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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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EQUINOCTIAL STORMS

It has long been believed that a storm of unusual severity may be expected at the time of the vernal or autumnal equinox, when the sun crosses the equator. In autumn the date for such a storm should be Sept. 23 or sometimes Sept. 22. True, a severe storm, such as a West Indian hurricane, may occur about this time, and general rains are becoming more frequent as we change from the weak summer type of "low" to the stronger winter type.

To see whether there was any special tendency for rain on the 22nd or 23rd, rainfall by days for Sept. 15 to 30 during the last 10 years was tabulated for Boston, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Richmond, Denver, and San Francisco. On the 22nd, all but Cincinnati had less rain than the daily average of the whole period, while on the 23rd three had more than the average, three less. Comparing the rainfall of the three five day periods Sept. 16 to 20, 21 to 25, and 26 to 30, the second or equinoctial one showed generally more rain than the first, but slightly less than the last period. The number of storms bringing a quarter of an inch of rainfall or more was about the same in each period.

There seems no reason to believe, then, from this sampling of weather data, that there is any particular virtue in the date of the equinox. If a storm does occur at that time, although it is likely to be called an equinoctial storm, we can be pretty certain that the sun's immediate crossing of the equator has nothing to do with it.

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(Tomorrow: Record American Downpours)

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