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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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STORMS IN PAIRS

Have you ever noticed that a heavy storm may be followed by a similar one within a week? It is not simply a case of chance, for not only are the probabilities of such storms occurring in pairs much less than their actual frequency, but also there is a reason for repetitions of this sort. "It never rains but it pours" has a meteorological significance as well as a human one.

Some outstanding examples may be mentioned. The most recent was the pairing of the storm at the end of March and the storm scarcely two days later, just before Easter. The first one, bringing the "worst" snowstorm, gales, or ice-storm of the cold season just closing, had a fairly strenuous repeater on about the same path, from Texas to the Lake Region and east-northeastward. The middle and North Atlantic seaboard had its sample early in February: a pair of burying snowstorms. Syracuse a few summers ago was flooded by two 4 to 5 inch rainfalls within a week, whereas the previous record for any day had been scarcely half that. Two snowstorms each exceeding by far any other in the history of Norfolk were similarly paired.

The parent lows that develop such great disturbances do not have the same early history, nor do they have the same characteristics or paths after they have done their worst. Evidently, it is the environment rather than the origin of the low that counts: not whence it comes, but what it finds. Large contrasts in temperature and an abundant supply of water vapor, both storm energizers, may make one great storm. If this disturbance, as is not unlikely, does not bring on a new order, the energizers are still available for the next low crossing the region. By the time the second one has passed, however, the original situation has been modified so that another repetition at the same place is not likely.

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