

A Science Service Feature

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! WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology

THE BIG WIND IN IRELAND

In that extremely interesting book "Great Storms", by C. Laughton and V. Heddon, published a few months ago in London, occurs the following statement:

"The British Isles certainly experienced at least two great storms in the nineteenth century. The greater of these, on January 6th, 1839, was severely felt in Ireland, but ^{since} has long been forgotten. The other swept Scotland on December 28th, 1879, and is remembered because it blow down the Tay Bridge while a train was passing over it."

It may be true that the storm of January 5-6, 1839 has passed into oblivion in the British Isles, but it is still often heard of in America, where it is invariably referred to as "the Big Wind in Ireland". The Weather Bureau receives several inquiries about it every year.

This storm appears to have been quite as severe in England as in Ireland and caused many disastrous shipwrecks on the British coasts. Several lives were lost on land as well as at sea. Information about the storm - rather meager from the meteorological standpoint - is given in the Times (London) of January 10-14, inclusive, 1839.

An article published in a Boston, Mass., newspaper four years ago says of this event:

"In proportion to the size of Ireland, the 'Big Wind' was a greater disaster than the San Francisco earthquake to America. It was so tragic a thing that for years afterward the events in Ireland were dated as happening before or after the 'Big Wind'. The last generation frequently spoke of persons being born 'since the Big Wind.'"

The Tay Bridge disaster is much less frequently heard of in this country, though it occasionally crops up in the query columns of newspapers. Messrs. Laughton and Heddon, in the book above mentioned, devote a whole chapter to it; the most circumstantial account we have seen.

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SCIENCE SERVICE,
21st and B Sts.,
Washington, D.C.