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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 18, 1928

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A TRUE NAUTICAL YARN

There is an old song about the gallant ship that "went three times round" and then "sank to the bottom of the sea -- the sea -- the sea." The brig "Charles Heddle" had a more remarkable experience. She went five times round and remained afloat.

This vessel, commanded by Captain Fink, sailed from Mauritius on February 21, 1845, and laid her course nearly due north. The wind and sea gradually increased and by the 23d she was in the throes of a hurricane. At that period the idea of winds blowing around storm centers was new even to men of science and a good many hard-headed mariners declined to take it seriously. Probably Captain Fink was one of the skeptics, for instead of attempting to maneuver his ship according to the rules laid down by "cyclonologists", he scudded before the wind under shortened sail, and eventually under bare poles.

The result of sailing constantly with the wind was that his course was a series of loops, each smaller than the one preceding, as the indraft of the wind brought him steadily closer to the center of low pressure. He thus made five circuits of the storm in as many days. Just how he escaped from the vicious circle is not recorded, but it is a fact that he did so and returned to Mauritius.

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