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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE CRIMEAN STORM

The "Crimean Storm" of November 14, 1854, is memorable in the history of weather disasters and likewise in the history of weather science. The Crimean War was in progress. English and French armies were besieging Sebastopol. The small harbor of Falaclava was crowded with shipping; besides which about 30 vessels lay outside this harbor, and there were many at other Crimean ports. These ships included, besides merchantmen, British and French men-of-war and several transports loaded with supplies badly needed for the coming winter campaign. In the storm that swept with hurricane violence over the Black Sea more than 30 vessels were lost with the greater part of their crews. On shore houses were unroofed, trees were uprooted, and most of the tents of the Allied armies were blown down. The soldiers suffered greatly from exposure and from the loss of their stores. The British hospital returns showed 8,000 sick by the end of the month.

Kinglake, in his "Invasion of the Crimea", gives a long account of this storm, but he completely ignores its most important consequence. One of the vessels lost at this time was the French warship "Henri IV". It was chiefly upon this occurrence that Leverrier, director of the Paris observatory, based his appeal to the Emperor Napoleon III for the initiation of an international telegraphic storm-warning service in Europe as a means of averting further disasters of the same character. His efforts were successful, and the service established in 1855 was the prototype of the storm-warning and weather-forecasting institutions now maintained by most of the civilized countries of the world.

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