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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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EXCEPTIONAL FLOODS

Extremely heavy and persistent rains attending the passage of an unusually extensive low-pressure area over the eastern United States during the week ending March 16 caused a general rise of the rivers in the eastern Gulf states and Georgia. The most serious floods occurred in southeastern Alabama, where the stages attained by the rivers were nearly as high as in the memorable floods of January, 1925. In some districts the water rose 20 to 30 feet above flood stage. The danger that loomed for a time that thousands of lives would be lost was fortunately averted. The actual loss of life was small, but great devastation was wrought by the invading waters and by an immense deposit of mud over settled and cultivated lands. Thousands of people suffered from exposure and hunger.

The most discouraging feature of such a visitation is that it must inevitably recur again and again. The region near the Gulf coast affected by the recent floods has almost the heaviest rainfall of eastern North America. It is covered by a network of "flashy" streams, that is, streams whose immediate rise in response to rainfall is a striking contrast to the deliberate and predictable rise that occurs, with similar rainfall, in the main stream of a great river system; notably in the lower Mississippi, where sudden floods are impossible. Neither is it feasible to erect any effective system of dikes and levees along these numerous small streams.

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