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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed Sept. 14, 1929

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AN UNFORGOTTEN GULF HURRICANE

A tropical hurricane that visited the Gulf of Mexico in August, 1856, before there was any government meteorological service to keep a lookout for such events and record their history, would scarcely be remembered at the present day if Lafcadio Hearn had not penned the story of the storm's tragic effects at Last Island, a summer resort off the Louisiana coast. The description, which will be found in his "Chita; a Memory of Last Island", is certainly the most vivid word picture of a storm in all literature. Interest centers at the fashionable hotel where, while four hundred guests were dancing the night away, the waters of the Gulf rolled in, the building collapsed, and most of the dancers perished.

A brief and much more prosaic account of this event is given in Lorin Blodget's "Climatology of the United States", published in 1857. The storm, he says, "may have come up from the southern portion of the Gulf, though it was apparently central at the coast of Louisiana nearly south of New Orleans. At Ile Derniere, or Last Island, it began with a high northeast wind on Saturday, August 9th, with a surf rolling with rapidly increasing violence from southeast, which indicated a gale in the distance in that quarter. This increased through the morning of Sunday the 10th, when the gale had changed to southeast and was at its height, flooding the island and destroying everything on it."
