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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 17, 1929

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MORE ABOUT EQUINOCTIAL STORMS

The unfounded belief in the existence of equinoctial storms is accepted at face value by many writers in America. Thus Longfellow did not realize that he was helping perpetuate a myth in writing,

"When descends on the Atlantic  
The gigantic  
Storm-wind of the Equinox,  
Landward in his wrath, he scourges  
The toiling surges,  
Laden with seaweed from the rocks."

Whittier gives this mythical tempest its New England name of "line storm":

"Along their foam-white curves of shore  
They heard the line storm rave and roar."

In contemporary American verse the same notion crops up. Thus Robert Frost, in "A Boy's Will," writes:

"The line-storm clouds fly tattered and swift,  
The road is forlorn all day."

In Spafford's "Gazetteer of the State of New York," published in 1813, is the statement: "To about the 15th or 20th, September is much like August; assuming a different character, however, with the equinoctial storm, which we usually have."

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