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September 25, 1929

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed September 18, 1929

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NEWSPAPER REFERENCES TO THE EQUINOCTIAL STORM

References in New York newspapers of the nineteenth century to that shadowy event, the equinoctial storm, were collected some years ago by J. H. Morrison, who published his gleanings in a little book.

A severe storm in September, 1815, which appears to have extended over the whole eastern seaboard of the United States, is referred to as "the equinoctial gale". An item published in September, 1838, read: "We had yesterday one of the steady, soaking northeast rains which usually precede or attend the autumnal equinox."

In September, 1844, appeared the following: "After a dry spell of unusual duration we had a slight shower on Saturday night last, which was succeeded yesterday by a settled rain from the northeast, a genuine equinoctial." In September, 1853, it is remarked: "Wednesday night's gale may be considered as a prelude of the equinoctial storms, which are generally attended with more or less disastrous effects."

In 1882, under the headline "The Equinoctial Storm", is the following statement: "If the storm of the past few days was not the traditional line storm, which scientists inform us does not exist, but which nevertheless appears just about this portion of the month, it resembled the genuine article as closely as was desirable."

The skeptical attitude of science, referred to in the last of these extracts, was fully confirmed a few years later by the statistical studies of Dr. Robert H. Scott in England and Prof. H. A. Hazen in America, proving that there is no maximum of storm frequency in either country close to the time of the spring or the autumn equinox. (All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

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