

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed November 14, 1929.

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REASSURING HURRICANE RECORDS

The area of the West Indies is large. The area of destruction in a West Indian hurricane is always relatively small. Thus it happens that, despite the fact that one or more of these storms occur every year, the occurrence of damaging winds is a comparatively rare event at any particular place in the islands.

Some figures that illustrate this fact have recently been published by Dr. O.L. Fassig for the island of Porto Rico. During the 30 years from 1899 to 1928, inclusive, this large island was affected by 20 hurricanes. Two of these storms were overwhelmingly destructive. Six caused heavy local losses, combined with beneficial general rains. In the remaining twelve the area of destructive winds did not touch the island, and the losses due to wind were insignificant in comparison with the great benefit to crops and municipal water supplies resulting from the attendant rains.

The two great hurricane disasters--the "San Ciriaco" storm of August 8, 1899, and the "San Felipe" storm of September 13, 1928--occurred at the beginning and the end of the 30-year period, so that Porto Rico had a long respite from such events. During the 9-year period 1917-1925 no hurricane winds blew anywhere in the island.

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