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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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FOG-BALLS

Relatively small masses of dense fog drifting with the wind over the surface of the sea are sometimes known as "fog-balls." At the time of the disastrous collision between the "Empress of Ireland" and the collier "Storstad" at the mouth of the St. Lawrence, in May, 1914, the accident was attributed by some authorities to the sudden envelopment of the vessels in one of these traveling fogs. Off the coast of Belgium several marine disasters have been due to the same cause, and the principal scientific discussions of the phenomenon have been published by Belgian meteorologists.

The fog-ball is sometimes an independent mass, while in other cases it forms a dense part of a more general fog, but with well-defined boundaries. Dr. F. Bertyn, of the Royal Observatory of Belgium, writes of it:

"The atmosphere being generally clear, there is suddenly seen to arise an immense fog-bank, whitish or dark in color, which gradually fills the whole horizon. As it approaches it assumes the aspect of a compact mass of vapor, rapidly advancing, and suddenly one finds oneself plunged in the midst of it. The phenomenon lasts fifteen to twenty minutes, and then, as the fog passes, the observer emerges as suddenly into the clear light of day. The phenomenon may occur on land as well as at sea, but it is more frequent over the water and at the mouths of rivers."

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