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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CHINESE FLOODS

The bulk of the rainfall in the Yangtse valley occurs in summer, and in a normal year the river at Hankow stands 40 feet higher in summer than in winter. A heavy downpour, such as may attend the "tail end" of a typhoon, brings a further rise of the waters, which sometimes amounts to two feet in 12 hours. According to the Admiralty "pilot" for the Yangtse, "the country around Hankow is usually inundated from July to September, between which dates the cities of Hankow, Hanyang and Wuchangfu appear like islands. In some years the river rises sufficiently high to inundate not only the Chinese portion of Hankow, but also the concessions, causing the inhabitants to flee to the hills or to Wuchang, which, being built on higher ground, is never inundated. Those people who remain at Hankow have, in these circumstances, to desert the lower and live in the upper stories of their dwellings."

The slow drainage of the flood waters is one of the most serious features of floods on China's vast alluvial plains. "In some regions," says W. H. Mallory, "it takes as much as two or three years for the waters of a severe inundation to find their way to the sea. This slow drainage, while due in part to the level nature of the country, is probably influenced to a greater extent by the network of dikes built along the streams and canals. These hold back the flood waters until their volume overtops the dikes, or the latter are breached by wave action, and then the water rushes on until it reaches the next obstruction."

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