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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 29, 1931

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THE EYE OF THE STORM

As a severe tropical cyclone pursues its course over sea and land there is always at its center a region, known as the "eye of the storm," in which the wind almost or entirely dies out, the rain ceases and the sky clears. This calm center is seldom more than 15 or 20 miles in diameter; hence, in the case of the individual storm, the chances of its passing directly over a good-sized town are very small indeed, but in the long run this is bound to happen from time to time. It happened last month, i.e., September, at Belize, in 1926 at Miami, in 1882 at Manila, etc.

The passage of the "eye" over a ship at sea (or the passage of a steamer through the "eye") is a far commoner event, and many graphic descriptions of ship-board experiences under such circumstances are extant. The following is from the log of the ship "Idaho," which encountered a China Sea typhoon in September, 1869:

"Suddenly, with one wild, unearthly, soul-thrilling shriek the wind dropped to a calm. Till then the sea had been beaten down by the wind and only boarded the vessel when she became completely unmanageable; but now the waters, relieved from all restraint, rose in their own might. Ghastly gleams of lightning revealed them piled up on every side in rough, pyramidal masses, mountain high; the revolving circle of wind, which everywhere enclosed them, causing them to boil and tumble as though they were being stirred in some mighty cauldron. The ship, no longer blown over on her side, rolled and pitched and was tossed about like a cork. The sea rose, toppled over and fell with crushing force upon her decks. Once she shipped immense bodies of water over both bows, both quarters and the starboard gangway at the same moment. Her seams opened fore and aft. Both above and below, men were pitched about the decks and many of them injured. At 20 minutes before 8 o'clock the vessel entered the vortex; at 20 minutes past 9 o'clock it had passed and the hurricane returned, blowing with renewed violence from the north, veering to the west. The ship was now only an unmanageable wreck."

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