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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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A STORMY ISLE

Heard Island, which lies to the southward of the larger and better-known Kerguelen Island, in the "Furious Fifties" of the Southern Ocean, was visited by Sir Douglas Mawson during his Antarctic expedition of 1929-31, and in a recent paper he says that it is in one of the stormiest oceanic regions on the globe.

"The island," he writes, "is about 25 miles in length. The high mountainous interior is rarely seen, as it is almost perpetually enveloped in clouds. The highest point has been reported to measure approximately 7,000 feet. We found glaciers descending from the highlands directly into the sea, presenting high ice cliffs to the waves.

"Heard Island is seldom relieved from the torment of constant wind, the effect of which is greatly to reduce the abundance and variety of vegetation as compared with that on Kerguelen Island. So constant is the wind that large areas of the exposed ground are without any vegetation whatsoever. In such localities the rock shingle exposed on the surface is eloquent of the prevailing conditions, for each pebble is faceted in the fashion characteristic of wind erosion."

Sir Douglas seems to have a penchant for exploring windy places. His book "The Home of the Blizzard" describes his sojourn on a part of the Antarctic coast that holds the world's blue ribbon for windiness.

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