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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 3, 1932

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THE STRENGTH OF A HURRICANE

Three times in recent years the strength of the winds in tropical hurricanes has been demonstrated in a sensational way. In Cuba in 1926, in Puerto Rico in 1928, and at Santo Domingo City in 1930, the wind ripped good-sized boards from buildings and drove them through the trunks of large royal palms in the vicinity, leaving them projecting several feet on the other side. These episodes indicate wind forces considerably greater than have ever been registered by instruments in such storms.

When it comes to appraising the magnitude of the forces with which man has to reckon when he plans means of protection from severe tropical storms, estimates of their total energy are even more instructive. Not long ago a Japanese meteorologist, Y. Horiguti, with circumstantial data at his disposal, estimated the strength of a typical typhoon -- i. e., a tropical hurricane of the Far East. He computed that the whirling monster exerted energy at the rate of 27,000,000,000 horse-power.

This figure is worth remembering when you hear of schemes for "dissipating" a hurricane by dropping bombs from an airplane, or, as a correspondent of the U.S. Weather Bureau suggested a few weeks ago, by sending a submarine to the center of an advancing tropical tempest, where it was to come to the surface and set off explosives at this supposedly vulnerable spot. Saying "Boo!" to the storm would be just as effective and less expensive.

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