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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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"TORNADO, BAHAMAS"

The Metropolitan Museum, in New York, has had on its walls since the year 1910, a painting by the late Winslow Homer entitled "Tornado, Bahamas," painted in 1898. The title is paradoxical for two reasons. Firstly, there is nothing in the picture suggesting that a tornado is at hand or has lately passed. The sky looks threatening, but shows no formed or incipient funnel cloud. Palm trees stand erect, though their fronds curve in the breeze. Tropical buildings in the foreground are intact. Secondly, and chiefly, tornadoes don't happen in the Bahamas!

Did the painter mean "hurricane" when he said "tornado"? Or is this just one of the illustrations of the fact that a great many painters know very little about the manifestations of Nature they essay to put on canvas? Too often they do not know what the things look like, even when they know what they are called. Witness 80 per cent. of all painted clouds and 100 per cent. of the painted rainbows!

Perhaps, however, what happened was this: On the west coast of Africa, thundersqualls have been called "tornadoes" for centuries. The term is actually much older in that sense than in the sense now current in America. The early settlers of the Bahamas were probably more familiar with African "tornadoes" than with the twisters of our plains and prairies. Has this application of the term survived in Bahaman English?

The writer of "Why The Weather?" would be grateful for information on this point from anybody who knows.

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