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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed September 27, 1933

THE BRIEF FAME OF STORMS

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The tempest that devastated Tampico the other day was the most destructive though probably not the most severe of the tropical cyclones that, during the past two months, have developed in unusual numbers in the tropical latitudes of both the Atlantic and the Pacific. How the event will rank in the catalogue of memorable storm disasters we cannot yet say with any degree of confidence.

Generally speaking, disastrous visitations of nature are not long remembered by the world at large. Few are even mentioned in the written histories of nations. A recent writer has called attention to the fact that the greatest and most destructive storm that ever visited the British Isles -- that of November, 1703 -- does not get a word of notice in a standard twelve-volume history of England.

One reason for this is that such disasters hardly ever influence to any marked extent the general course of human affairs. The political effects of storms, earthquakes and the like are usually negligible and their economic effects transitory. As to the latter, somebody has estimated that the Japanese earthquake of 1923, with its attendant fires, the most appalling natural disaster of the present century, did not set Japan back economically by more than a twelve-month.

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