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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed December 14, 1935

A NEAR EASTERN SANDSTORM

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman
Authority on Meteorology

"The onset of a sandstorm in open country is an awe-inspiring sight. The air is unusually calm, hot and even oppressive, the horizon seems shut off by a yellowish cushion which rises unhurriedly as the storm approaches; then an opaque wall rises very high (aviators have met it above 3,000 or even 6,000 feet). Some sharp gusts of scorching air strike the observer, then there is once more a sinister calm; the wall is very near. Suddenly the wind rises in one gust; minute grits from the earth riddle one with a thousand stings; eyes, nose, mouth and ears are at once filled with sand; one is forced to seek shelter. Without pause, sometimes for hour on hour, the wind tears in this way at the surface of the ground, wrenching up all that can be raised, until even in the best closed houses a gritty layer of several millimetres covers everything. At last the wind drops and one breathes once more, but in a yellow fog. In other cases, which are more pleasant, the wind continues but with no descending component, and the air is soon clear."

Such is a sandstorm in the Near East, as described in a recent report of the British Meteorological Office relating to flying conditions along the Aleppo-Baghdad-Karachi air route. The description is paraphrased from one by a French authority, Charles Combier.

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