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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed December 1, 1927

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A WEATHER ODYSSEY

Many years ago the Honorable Ralph Abercromby, a well-known British meteorologist, conceived the novel idea of publishing a book of travels devoted primarily to the subject of weather. The result was his "Seas and Skies in Many Latitudes, or Wanderings in Search of Weather," which appeared in 1888. The author says of his travels:

"The special object of the voyages was to investigate the phenomena of the sky and weather in various parts of the world. Numberless books of exploration and adventure have been published, and numerous naturalists' voyages have met with an appreciative reception from the public. Geologists and astronomers have succeeded in interesting the general reader in their journeyings, but no meteorologist has yet attempted the task. The different races of man and beast, the varying forms of plant life, the mountains and rocks, the shells and fossils in all parts of the world have all fascinated the imagination of many readers, but, strange to say, one of the most striking aspects of nature - the face of the sky - has never been methodically described by any traveler."

The book is unique. The adventures and experiences described are varied but there is weather on almost every page. Unfortunately particular kinds of weather cannot always be found when one wants to observe them. One of Abercromby's strong wishes was to encounter a tropical hurricane. He selected the hurricane season, visiting Mauritius and he spent much time on the China Sea in the hope of meeting a typhoon, but his search was not rewarded.

The traveler gleaned a great deal of out-of-the-way meteorological information. Somebody ought to repeat the enterprise at the present day, when there is so much more scientific knowledge to be brought to bear on the facts observed, and when facilities for taking first-rate photographs of atmospheric phenomena are so much better than they were in Abercromby's time. If some rich philanthropist will finance the expedition, the writer of these notes will provide the traveler.

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