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## HURRICANE AT SEA

THE hurricane which engulfed the Pamir and almost all her crew in the Atlantic last month was not the first she had encountered. FRANCIS M. RENNER, of Wellington, who made six voyages aboard her — three of them as third mate — when she was sailing under the New Zealand flag, experienced a similar storm south-west of Rarotonga. Here is his description of it, given in the Broadcasts to Schools programme, "The World We Live In."



THE PAMIR running before the wind

THE hurricane of the South Pacific Ocean, the typhoon of the China Seas and the cyclone of the Atlantic Ocean are the names given to those terrifying storms which begin in the hot steamy air near the equator. They are huge whirlpools in the air. You have seen what happens when you pull the plug out of your bath, how the water is drawn down and begins to whirl round and round the plug hole. Well, if you think of that shape upside down and widened by hundreds of miles with the air instead of water rushing up at the centre you have the picture of a hurricane. We don't know what causes them, they form quite suddenly and grow rapidly. Sometimes they expand to a width of over 400 miles. Once formed they usually move in an easterly direction before swinging from the equator away to the north or to the south. Sometimes they travel slowly, sometimes up to about 40 miles an hour. A seaman dreads these storms. Fortunately, though, he has learned to recognise the warning signs which appear in the skies. He has his barometer and other instruments. He notices the increasingly heavy swell which begins to roll up over the sea. He can usually tell from all these signs where the centre lies and which way it is travelling.

Part of these storms is bad enough but with the great winds and huge seas met at the centre it is really fearful.

Here the seas driven inward meet in terrible confusion through which few ships have survived. The water leaps high in the air. It twists and turns. A ship has no chance with the rushing walls of water coming at her from all directions. But strangely enough, it is dead calm in the centre, the air is damp and misty. Sometimes there are hundreds of tired birds which have been known to fall on to the deck of ships. The calm lasts only a short time before the wind again bursts out from an opposite direction.

It was perhaps such a storm as this which overcame and overwhelmed our old friend Pamir. But we cannot be sure how it happened. There are so many ways. The sea is treacherous and furious when driven by these tremendous tearing winds. I saw her once fight through a hurricane. It came on us suddenly one night in the South Pacific about 100 miles south-west of Rarotonga. This storm must have formed suddenly for we had no warning at all. At eight bells, that is eight o'clock at night, the wind suddenly changed from south-west to north-east, fairly strong at first, and we had to do a lot of work squaring the yards in and trimming the sails. But soon it began to blow hard until by nine o'clock we had all hands on deck fighting to get the sails made fast. Then about quarter-past nine it came in great sweeping gusts, tearing at her with such force that it became impossible to move up aloft and we had to call the boys down. The crew could do nothing. We put the helm up and ran away before the howling storm. For a while some of the sails held. With two of the men



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