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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed November 1, 1927

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THE MOST FAMOUS STORM IN HISTORY

One of the most celebrated weather events in all history was the "Great Storm" of November, 1703, which raged over much of Europe and was especially severe in and about the British Isles. Daniel Defoe wrote a book about it, and it is referred to in the well-known lines of Addison --

So, when an angel, by divine command,
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,
Such as of late o'er pale Britannia past.

Throughout the south and west of England the destructive effects of the wind were quite without precedent for that part of the world. Hundreds of buildings were ruined and there was vast destruction of trees. Defoe places the loss of life on land at 123, while hundreds more were injured. The losses at sea were far greater. More than 8,000 seamen perished, including some 1,500 men of the Royal Navy. The first Eddystone lighthouse was destroyed in this storm. Its architect, Winstanley, had expressed the hope of being in the building during the worst gale it should ever experience, and his wish was tragically accomplished. He had gone to the lighthouse the day before to superintend some repairs, and he never returned.

Much information concerning the storm has been gleaned by an English meteorologist, Henry Harries, from an examination of contemporary log-books of British men-of-war. It appears to have been quite comparable in violence to the worst hurricanes of the tropics.

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