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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed March 17, 1928

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THE "EURYDICE" SQUALL

Today is the fiftieth anniversary of a memorable storm. On the afternoon of March 24, 1878, the British frigate "Eurydice", homeward bound from the West Indies, was off Ventnor, in the Isle of Wight, running with all sails set before a moderate westerly wind. Suddenly, without the slightest warning, she was struck by a furious squall from the northwest. Before sail could be shortened she heeled over, water poured into her open ports, and she speedily went down with all hands. The squall lasted but a few minutes. It was accompanied by snow, but was preceded and followed by clear skies.

While this event, viewed merely as a disaster, was not of great importance in naval annals, the "Eurydice" Squall is a landmark in the history of meteorology. Reports collected from various places showed that the storm was not an isolated disturbance, but that it had swept over the British Isles, moving broadside on, the line being about 400 miles in length and only two or three miles in breadth. Meteorologists who investigated the storm described it as a "line of squalls", an expression that was soon afterward shorted to "line-squall". The scientific study of squalls, undertaken at the time, has been in progress ever since.

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