A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed July 10, 1930.

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EARLY ACCOUNTS OF "SPOUTS"

"Spout" phenomena--including waterspouts and landspouts (tornadoes)--were doubtless well known to the ancient Greeks and Romans, as they are of rather frequent occurrence on the Mediterranean and the adjacent lands, yet no definite account of them is found in their writings. In fact the earliest descriptions that set forth clearly the characteristics of these whirls date from the middle of the 16th century of our era. One is given by Olaus Magnus in his "History of the Northern Nations," and one by the Portuguese poet Camoens in his famous epic "The Lusiad."

A tornado that occurred near Rheims on August 10, 1680, is described in detail by a French priest named Lamy in a book first published in 1689. The author saw this storm and made a careful inspection of its path. An even more circumstantial account of a tornado that occurred near Padua on July 29, 1686, together with information concerning other Italian tornadoes, is found in a work written by A. Montanari, professor at the University of Padua, published in 1694, some years after the author's death. This gives the length and breadth of the path followed by the storm of 1686, its speed of travel, etc.

Both Lamy's and Montanari's works contain pictures of landspouts. A picture of a waterspout is given in the "Journal des Voyages de M. de Monconys," published in 1665. The spout was seen and drawn by the author near Sardinia in 1648.

The earliest published chart of a tornado path is probably the one contained in a pamphlet by Richard Bugden entitled "The Passage of the Hurricane from the Sea-side at Bexhill in Sussex to Newingden-Level, the Twentieth of May 1729" (London, 1730).

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