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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

A WET WATERSPOUT

At Swansea, Wales, on the afternoon of September 4, 1886, a waterspout was seen to travel from the adjacent bay to an eminence called Kelvey Hill. The latter is about 650 feet high, and the upper part is almost vertical, while on the lower slopes some rows of houses had been built. When the spout struck the hill great torrents of water rushed down the slopes, burst through the upper row of houses and carried all the movable contents into the street below. Many people were washed from a back room into a front room, out of the door and down the hill. The amount of earth and rock washed down by the torrent was estimated at 8,000 tons.

None of the rainfall stations around Swansea recorded as much as two inches of rain on the day in question, and it seems probable that most of the water that fell on Kelvey Hill was not rain but was water drawn up by the spout during its passage over the bay. A case was recorded at Banbury, England, in 1873 in which two spouts drew nearly all the water out of a pool over which they passed, carried it up about 60 feet and deposited it at a place 200 yards away. Presumably it is events of this sort that explain occasional showers of small fishes, frogs, snails and the like.

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21st and B Sts.,
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