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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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COLLIDING WITH A WATERSPOUT

A waterspout is a tornado over water, but it does not exert the terrific destructive force of the tornado on land. A good many vessels have collided with these whirling monsters without, as a rule, suffering serious damage. A typical case was that reported by Captain Fergus Ferguson, of the British steamship "Hestia."

On the afternoon of April 4, 1902, while off Cape Hatteras, the captain observed several spouts in process of formation at a distance of 300 to 400 yards to windward. The largest of these, and the only one completely formed, seemed to be headed directly toward the ship. The captain at first attempted to avoid a collision by changing his course, but he found that this was impossible. Ordering everybody below, he remained on deck until the spout was close on the ship and then rushed for shelter.

A deafening roar was quickly followed by strong gusts of wind and a sudden shock, as the spout struck amidships and passed over the vessel. Captain Ferguson regained the deck in time to see two tarpaulins, which had covered the hatches, and a plank eight feet long by ten inches wide high up in the air, while the log line with the patent log attached extended straight up in the air to a distance of 40 feet. Beyond the loss of light moveable objects on deck, no harm was done.

The diameter of the spout was between 40 and 50 feet. Within the column was a dark core, looking almost black, with a diameter of about two feet.

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