A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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## DEATH VALLEY CLOUDBURSTS

Death Valley, California, furnishes an illustration of the fact that some of the most spectacular downpours of rain are those that occur in deserts. This valley has the lightest known rainfall in the United States, yet it is subject to terrific cloudbursts, an account of which is given by Bourke Lee in his recent book, "Death Valley." He says:

"The roaring floods pour down the mountains, boom through the canyons and spread out over the giant fans of gravel at the canyon mouths. The cloudbursts occur infrequently and usually have few spectators, because few people remain to enjoy the spectacle. When a cloudburst starts to form almost every one seems to yearn for other scenes. But there is no danger except in restricted canyons and there is always plenty of warning. The cloudburst begins as a great black cloud dimming the sun. The cloud sweeps toward a mountain. An hour passes. Long tendrils reach down from the cloud mass and grasp the mountain. The cloud sits down upon the mountain and rain pours upon the uplands. Thousands of waterfalls burst from the sheer flanks of the hills and the canyons are alive with rushing water. The valley silence is gone. There is the crash of water. The road across the gravel fan below Poison Spring disappears beneath a rumbling sheet of water. The county road gang just got through working on that stretch of road and the road crew will not be back until next year."

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