

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 10, 1933

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INSIDE A WATERSPOUT

Descriptions of the passage of a waterspout over a ship are not very common. The British clipper-ship "Crest of the Wave" had this experience in the Mediterranean in August, 1855. One of her junior officers described the episode in the magazine "Leisure Hour" as follows:

"The spout did not rake us fore and aft, but zigzagged across the ship passing athwart the forecastle, then back again over amidship, and a final track along the poop, passing right over me as I stooped to clear the mizzen topsail haulyards. For a few moments my sensation was that of being drawn aloft with the spiral motion of the spray and water, not in the least that of being crushed to the deck by a heavy volume of water. Shaking myself like a Newfoundland dog, when I recovered from the shock, I had a good view of what was passing on the main deck, which was flooded. I had seen the men flying before the advancing spout from side to side, tumbling over one another, and over spare and floating casks; and now I was able to laugh, as I witnessed their efforts to regain their legs and free themselves from the rush and swirl of water caused by the roll of the ship. We escaped without injury to ship or crew, which was wonderful, considering the height of the sea sucked up by the spout, and the violence of the accompanying whirlwind."

The ship's captain, writing of the same event in his log, remarks: "I have heard it stated that any body passing through a waterspout would burst it. This one had half its base acting upon my ship, but still remained perfect in form and action."

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