

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 14, 1933

A REMARKABLE SQUALL

One of the most spectacular squalls on record was observed on October 8, 1929, near the mouth of the Shatt-al-Arab, at the head of the Persian Gulf. It is described as follows by Capt. S.J. Oakshott:

"About 2 in the afternoon it was observed from our position near the inner bar that a small, rapidly rising cloud had appeared in the east. As it got higher, it twisted and turned so rapidly that it seemed to be in the vortex of an aerial whirlpool. Before long it had spread out in the shape of a mushroom and probably covered an area of about 20 miles. At the same time the breeze sprang up and the squall began to travel toward us.

"As it came, the edges seemed to dip down until they were touching the surface of land and water, while on its back black masses rolled and turned over on themselves in a most exceptional manner. It was totally different from anything I have seen at sea during twenty-one years in all parts of the world.

"When it had reached about a mile to the south of us, a waterspout formed in its center and the whole mass rushed overhead like a tremendous umbrella. As the edge came immediately above us, it was like looking up at a falling cliff, so solid did it appear. The spout passed us some distance to the south, and afterward disappeared in a shower of rain, the whole squall in about three hours being below the western horizon, leaving a fresh wind but a clear sky."

In studying the history of the Persian Gulf at the British Museum Captain Oakshott found descriptions of two similar storms; one in 1626 and one in 1775.

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21st and Constitution Ave,
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