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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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LIGHTNING AND SHIPS

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman
Authority on Meteorology

It is probable, says a recent note in the Marine Observer (London), that the wooden sailing ship, being a poor conductor of electricity, was more often struck and damaged by lightning than the modern steamer, especially as the masts were in general taller. In 1855 Arago published his "Meteorological Essays" in which he records 71 cases of ships being struck between the years of 1741 and 1834. He states that this list was compiled only from the temperate latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere. A few of the more interesting facts stated by Arago are given here.

In a period of fifteen months in the years 1829 and 1830, five ships of the Royal Navy were struck by lightning in the Mediterranean, the "Ocean", "Melville" and "Gloucester", ships of the line, also "Mosquito" and "Madagascar". The masts of all these vessels suffered considerable damage. In 1811, near Cape Finisterre, the "Glory", ship of the line, had all her masts split during a thunderstorm. On a date not stated, the "Resistance" and the "Lynx", accompanying a convoy, disappeared altogether after some lightning strokes. Arago also gives instances of serious casualties, with loss of life and injury. Thus in the "Sultan", at Port Mahon in 1805, five men were killed by lightning, two thrown overboard and drowned, and three were severely hurt. In 1809 in the Bay of Rosas, nine men were killed on the "Repulse" during a thunderstorm.

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