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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
of Clark University,
discusses:

THE BLIZZARD

There is a sharply defined difference between a heavy snowstorm and a blizzard. The characteristics of a blizzard are a gale of wind, zero cold, and drifting, powdery snow. The wind may not have been accompanied by actual snowfall, yet to the height of several hundred feet the air may be filled with whirling masses of snow, whipped up by the gale. As observed from a lofty elevation, the sky above may all the time be clear and blue. The snow covering, intensely cold and dry, submits to the pulverizing influence of high winds.

This phenomenon is not common in the eastern part of the country. Though the wind in a blizzard usually comes from the north it may be westerly instead. One of the worst blizzards that ever struck the Ohio Valley, that of January 12, 1918, came with a southwest gale, during which the mercury fell to 20 below zero. On the northern Great Plains the blizzard descends from the north with frightful violence of wind, chokingly full of snow as fine as dust, with the mercury at dangerously low levels. It is not surprising that in such blinding storms as these, people stray from beaten paths and sometimes perish only a few feet from a house.

(Tomorrow: Hilltops Warmest in Cold Snaps)

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