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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CAUSE OF ICE STORMS

Meteorological conditions of the sort that favor ice storms occur whenever we have a "northeast storm". That is, under such conditions there is a cold wind blowing over the ground, and usually, riding over it is a warm moist wind from practically the opposite direction. If the general temperatures at the ground are in the low twenties, the warmer wind higher up is not usually much above freezing in any portion, and so the precipitation is in the form of snow, sometimes hard snow or irregular or angular sleet. However, if the lower air temperatures are but a few degrees below freezing, and either the snow from higher levels will largely or wholly melt in passing through it, or raindrops may form within this warmest layer. Under such conditions sleet or glaze will form as slush-drops or rain-drops fall through the cold wind. If the temperatures near the ground are above freezing no glaze will form, though there may be some sleet, frozen at a short distance above the ground where the temperatures may be slightly below freezing.

Rarely during rain does the temperature stay low enough but not too low, that is, about 25 to 30 degrees Fahrenheit, to permit the accumulation of considerable glaze or sleet without an admixture of snow, on the one hand, or a melting of the ice on the other. Just three years ago today, however, there ended such a storm which through central and western Massachusetts and part of central New York had produced in three days four inches or more of sleet and ice on the ground, and two inches of glaze on exposed objects that could stand such a great accumulation of ice. Farther north there was over a foot or two of snow; farther south there was heavy rain that did not freeze.

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