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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WHEN WINTER COMES

Though December is generally recognized as the first winter month, winter begins when the temperature first falls far below the freezing point and fails immediately to return. Autumn, however, does not end till such low temperatures become the rule rather than the exception. According to such a definition of winter and autumn, it is evident that our seasons cannot be separated according to the calendar. They overlap, some years more than others. Over a large area our first autumn days this year occurred in mid-August, and the last days of summer the 1st and 2nd of September. In the Great Lakes Region and the East generally the first days of winter were November 17 and 18 in 1924, yet touches of autumn may still be welcomed.

The coming of winter is usually an impressive occasion, though rarely so overwhelming as it was this year. After a period of 7 weeks since the last important rain and wind in the northeastern United States, during which spell of dry weather temperatures fell at no time more than a few degrees below freezing, a violent northwesterly gale and cold wave descended without warning on the unsuspecting populace. The temperature fell 20 or more degrees while the people slept. Some froze to death in the cold gale. Exposed greenhouses, pipes, automobiles froze, the autos in great numbers being incapacitated. The gale developed suddenly and drew air with terrible rapidity from the uncharted interior of Labrador only a few hundred miles away.

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(Tomorrow: The Making of a Severe Cold Wave)

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