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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE AVALANCHE WIND

We are accustomed to associate destructive winds with severe storms, tornadoes, or tropical hurricanes. In mountain regions a wind of hurricane velocity, though of small extent, is sometimes produced in an entirely different way, by an avalanche. Just as an express train is preceded by a blast of air, so the snow when falling with great rapidity down a mountain side sends a devastating wind ahead of it. Avalanches of cold, powdery, surface snow may attain the surprising velocity of 200 to 250 miles per hour. Such "lightning flows" produce the worst avalanche winds, sufficient to mow down well grown forests and to cause damage to trees even more than half a mile distant from the avalanche path. The so-called "ground avalanches" of heavy wet snow move much more slowly, perhaps 15 to 30 miles per hour, and produce less powerful winds. Yet the wind from such an avalanche, "turned head over heels" a workman who was passing at a distance of more than 50 yards. This man had been knocked down during the War by the blast from a shell, but he gave the palm for violence to the avalanche!

(Tomorrow: Forecasting Avalanches)

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