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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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MISFIT WEATHER FROM THE SOUTH

Few of those so fortunate as to winter in the South realize that the air they there enjoy is the "makings" for the snow, sleet, damp, and mild weather of the regions to the north. Winter storms are born and bred of the contrasts between the mildness of the south and the coldness of the north. The relatively abundant water vapor of the southern air, especially of that over the Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf Stream, is as food to these storms. By the latent heat of condensation of the cooled vapor is the temperature contrast and energy of the storm partly maintained.

While the air stays south where it is warm enough to take on more moisture rather than to give some up, no one can complain of its characteristics, but when it invades the north and gets a chill, by passing over the cold ground, by mixing with the colder air, and by expanding in rising over obstructing denser air masses, then it is generally unwelcome. Then the dense gloomy clouds, heavy snow, sleet, or rain that freezes, make people wish they lived farther north where such invasions are less common. If the southern air comes very rapidly and works its way to the ground we may have the foggy slush of a winter thaw. All this is "misfit" weather. In winter we want winter weather, that is, more or less continuous cold weather, and not a lot of sub-tropical weather served up cold. We like ice cream better than a warm pudding that has got cold.

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(Tomorrow: Snow Surfaces)

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