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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SNOW FLOODS

An exciting feature of spring is the floods from melting snows. The late snows in the Mid-West have already passed off without inundating. But northern New York, New England, and eastern Canada are not yet out of danger. Unlike the heavy rains of summer that come with but little warning, the accumulated winter and early spring precipitation on the thousands of square miles of northeastern upland and highland hangs like the sword of Damocles over the dwellers on the river lowlands near and far. Everybody knows what a flood 6 to 10 inches of rainfall in a few days can make, and, correspondingly, what would happen if winter's accumulated water were released in as short a time. Till late in March nearly a foot of water was locked up in the heavy snow-cover of the northeastern highlands. At the beginning of April some 8 to 11 inches still remained. Brief touches of spring started rushes of water, but each time the flood-gates were quickly closed by freezing weather. And more snows replenished the supply. The danger has been mitigated but is still considerable. The Connecticut River was nearly full before last week's thaw set in.

Heavy rains under such conditions are disastrous, not because of the amount of snow they melt, for that is inconsequential, but on account of their addition to the snow water released by the attendant warm winds. An inch of rain is of considerable moment when one considers the top few feet of a flood.

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