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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CUTTING THROUGH A NORTHER

When a norther passes over the southern plains there is a change of weather that is both sudden and marked. But when a railroad traveler cuts across its moving mass from east to west the changes are still more striking. Here is an account of a recent experience of this sort.

Leaving mild sunny weather in Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma the traveler plunges into a cold wind with cloudy skies. The surface wind was from the northeast, and had a temperature near the freezing point, while the clouds above were moving rapidly from exactly the opposite direction. Soon rain began falling, icicles forming as the water dripped from roofs. Low clouds appeared from the northeast and covered the sky darkly as rain continued. People congregated about their red-hot stoves.

Traveling westward higher up onto the plains the northeast wind became colder. The side of the train became encased in ice; and another train, from the west, had drifted snow piled on its steps and whitening its rear. A little snow, sleet and fine rain fell through the cold wind of the norther, presumably still from the warm southwest wind above, that return current of air getting out of the way of the intruding heavy mass at the surface.

Turning southwest, the train moved with the cold wind and on passing through the high snow zone, entered clouds of liquid drizzle at 24 degrees Fahrenheit, moving from the south. Trees, bushes, wires were encased in mountain frostwork. Then the train descended out of the clouds into clear cool air, and soon ran into a brisk southwest wind with a temperature of 60.

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