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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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Authority on Meteorology

A CELEBRATED HAILSTORM

A hailstorm that lives in history is the one that occurred in Europe on July 13, 1788. Beginning in the center of France in the early morning, it passed northward in two parallel bands, about 12 miles apart, crossed Belgium, and finally died out in Holland in the afternoon. The western band was about 10 miles wide and 420 miles long; the eastern, five miles wide and nearly 500 miles long. Profound darkness preceded the passage of the storm. The hail lasted only seven or eight minutes at any one place.

No less than 1,309 communes in France suffered from this visitation, and the total loss was nearly \$5,000,000. It is said that the distress occasioned by the storm hastened the outbreak of the French Revolution.

Concerning the immediate effects of the hail Charles Tomlinson writes: "The whold face of nature was so entirely changed that no person who had slept through the tempest could have believed himself in the same part of the world when he awoke. Instead of the smiling bloom of summer and the rich prospects of a forward autumn, which were just before spread over the face of that fertile and beautiful country, it now presented the dreary aspect of an arctic winter. The soil was changed into a morass; the standing corn beaten into a quagmire; the vines broken to pieces, the fruit trees of every kind were demolished; and the hail lay unmelted in heaps like rocks of solid ice. Even the robust forest trees were incapable of withstanding the fury of the tempest, and a large wood of chestnut trees, in particular, was so much damaged that it presented, after the storm, little more than bare and naked trunks."

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