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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE DEADLIEST HOT WEATHER ON EARTH

When the mercury climbs into the upper nineties and a flood of humid air from the Atlantic "high" makes life a burden, there is a grain of comfort in the reflection that the worst type of hot weather is unknown in the United States. The acme of torridity is attained in the deserts of southwestern Asia, where blows that most dreaded of all winds, the simoom.

Measured with a thermometer, the temperature of this wind is not higher than is occasionally registered in other parts of the world. It is the combination of heat and rapid air-movement that makes this fiery blast so destructive to the life of man and beast that the presence of a mysterious poison in the air is the popular explanation of its deadly effects. The word "simoom (often misspelled "simoon") signifies "poison" in Arabic.

If the internal temperature of the human body is raised a few degrees above "blood heat" (98.6 degrees), the result is usually fatal. When the temperature outside rises above this point, the body perspires, the perspiration evaporates, and this cooling process generally keeps the internal temperature from rising above the danger-point. Suppose the temperature of the air is excessively high; say 120 degrees. If the air is also still and dry, perspiration will prevent the body from being overheated. There is a limit, however, to the amount of perspiration the sweat glands can secrete. If a strong wind is blowing at this temperature, the heat brought to the body by convection will more than offset cooling by evaporation, and the victim soon succumbs.

The desert dwellers often protect themselves from the simoom by lying down and burying head, hands and feet in their clothing, so that no bare skin is exposed to the parching blast.

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