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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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"WINDFALL" IN THE FOREST

A moderate amount of "windfall", as foresters call the breaking down of branches and trees by the wind, may be beneficial as a means of thinning and pruning a forest. Carried to an extreme the process sometimes causes enormous damage.

It is recorded that in November,1893,a single storm blew down 1,850,000 trees in two counties of Scotland. In America there have been a number of celebrated "blowdowns", the most remarkable of which was the great Olympic Blowdown of January 29,1921. The storm in question,which is supposed to have been a small "secondary" cyclone, moved in from the Pacific and smote the heavily forested Olympic Peninsula of western Washington. The wind is believed to have attained a velocity of at least 150 miles an hour, rivaling the worst blasts of tropical hurricanes.

Over an area of 900 square miles this storm mowed down thousands of big trees, many of them more than a century old. The total amount of timber laid low was about 8,000,000,000 board feet, or one-fifth of the amount used annually throughout the United States. Though no lives were lost, many people living in the clearings of the forest were imprisoned for days after the storm by the fallen timber, which blocked all the roads. In a stretch of three miles on one highway 1,500 trees had to be sawed through to open up the road. The storm caused a fearful destruction of wild life. Hundreds of elk and a vast number of smaller animals perished.

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