

A Science Service Feature

Released on receipt
but intended for use
January 25, 1928.

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed January 18, 1928.

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Authority on Meteorology

A TYPICAL BLIZZARD

The following vivid description of a blizzard on the plains of North Dakota was published forty years ago by C. A. Lounsbury:

"The sun at rising was hid behind a red mantle of clouds. The air was unusually moist. A gentle mist deposited moisture on every twig; the mist turned to rain; the rain to snow. About four inches of snow fell. The thermometer was in the vicinity of the freezing-point. About 9 p.m. the wind shifted to the northwest and its velocity increased to about 40 miles an hour. It turned cold, and each separate flake of snow became a particle of ice.

"As the wind would lift fine dust and whirl it through the air, so this body of snow was lifted. To distinguish the form of a human being 10 feet away was impossible. A barn, even, could not have been seen 20 feet in front of one. It was a mad rushing combination of wind and snow, which neither man nor beast could face. The snow found its way through every crack and crevice. Barns and stacks were literally covered by the drifting snow, and when the storm was over cattle fed from the tops of the stacks. My sheep huddled together in the sheds, and many of them were smothered.

"Persons lost upon the prairies were almost certain to meet death unless familiar with the nature of these storms ... I learned of many instances where persons were lost in trying to go from the house to the barn, and of other instances where cords were fastened to the house so that, if the barn should be missed, by holding to the cord the house could be found again."

This was a true blizzard. A storm in which the wind does not fill the air with blinding clouds of fine snow is not a blizzard.

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21st and B Sts.,
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