

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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Authority on Meteorology

LOOMIS'S METEOROLOGY

Half a century ago Professor Elias Loomis's "Treatise on Meteorology" was the standard work on weather science in this country. It was used as a textbook at the school at Fort Myer, Virginia, where soldiers of the Signal Service were trained for duty as weather observers, and many of these men continued to swear by "Loomis" for years afterward. The work was published in 1868, two years before the foundation of the national meteorological service, and was frequently reprinted, with only minor alterations.

Though this once celebrated treatise is far from representing the present state of meteorological knowledge and ideas, it is still worth the student's attention, since it discusses a good many matters that are ignored in the typical meteorological textbook of today. There are, for example, brief accounts of snow-rollers (wind-made snowballs), red snow, ice caves, avalanches, cyanometers and rain without clouds. Two chapters are devoted to meteors and meteorites, and one large section deals with the aurora.

The author is generally lucid, but the following statement on page 167 was a tough nut for the soldier-meteorologists to crack.

"Some have supposed that ball lightning was the agglomeration of ponderable substance in a state of great tenuity, strongly charged with electricity."

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