

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE BIGGEST HAILSTONES

The tallest hailstone stories come from India. Near Seringapatam, in that country, a block of ice "as large as an elephant" is said to have fallen during the reign of Tippoo Sahib. The chroniclers tell us that three days passed before the fierce Indian sun could melt it. Another block of ice 20 feet in its largest diameter is reported to have fallen at Dharwar in 1838. The French missionary Huc tells of a storm in Mongolia during which a piece of ice "larger than a millstone" fell near his house.

That in all such cases enormous masses of ice have been found on the ground after a hailstorm is not incredible, but they did not "fall". They evidently resulted from the coalescence of a great number of smaller hailstones lying closely packed together.

The maximum possible size of a hailstone cannot be positively stated. At Cazorla, Spain, on June 15, 1829, houses were crushed under blocks of ice, some of which are said to have weighed 4 1/2 pounds. As recently as August 10, 1925, a hailstone weighing 4 1/2 pounds was reported to have fallen through the roof of a house at Heidgraben, Schleswig-Holstein. This stone was nearly 10 inches long. In the summer of 1902 hailstones weighing 10 pounds were reported by an English missionary to have fallen at Yuwu, Shansi Province, China.

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