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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE GREATEST "BLOWDOWN" ON RECORD

So far as the forests of North America are concerned, the most remarkable case of windbreak on record was undoubtedly the "Olympic blowdown" of January 29, 1921, which devastated an immense forest area on the Olympic Peninsula of western Washington. A veritable hurricane, due supposedly to a small "secondary" cyclonic disturbance that moved inland from the Pacific, felled big trees in vast numbers. The total amount of fallen timber was estimated at 8,000,000,000 board feet; about equal to one-fifth of the annual consumption of wood in the United States.

A single storm in November, 1893, blew down 1,850,000 trees in two counties of Scotland. It is probable, however, that the greatest devastation of trees by wind in all history was that which attended the fall of a monster meteorite in Yenisei Province, Siberia, on June 30, 1908. The scene of the fall, which is in an almost inaccessible wilderness north of the "Stony" Tunguska River, has only recently been explored by an expedition led by L. A. Kulik. When the meteorite or aggregation of meteorites struck the earth, in the heart of a primeval forest, an irresistible air wave spread out in all directions, felling the trees over an area said to amount to thousands of square kilometers. The trees, many of which are of great size, all lie fanwise, with their tops pointing outward, in a broad circular zone surrounding a large central area, which has been swept entirely bare. Most of the region was seared by fire as well as blasted by wind.

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