A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 8, 1929

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ICE SPINES

There seems to be no end to the curious forms assumed by snow and ice, and new varieties are reported almost every year. Mr. F.E. Matthes, of the U. S. Geological Survey, has recently described one that apparently was previously unknown to science. A tiny puddle of water had gathered in a shallow cavity, drilled in rock at a quarry. The weather turned cold and a sheet of ice formed over the surface of the water. Eventually the whole body of water turned to ice, with the usual sudden expansion that accompanies freezing. Near the middle of the surface ice a small break occurred and the freezing water emerged in the form of a vertical spine of ice a couple of inches high. An examination of this spine showed within it numerous little bubbles. On another occasion, on the upper slope of Mount Rainier, Mr. Matthes found a large number of these ice spines projecting from small frozen pools in cavities at the surface of the rocky mountainside. In this case the spines were not vertical, but were inclined at various angles. The phenomenon is, apparently, so rare that special conditions of temperature must be necessary for its occurrence. Students of ice would like to know more about this formation and would welcome descriptions, and especially photographs, from anybody who may happen to observe it.

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