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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 15, 1929

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology

AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SNOWSTORM

In February, 1717, New England experienced some remarkably heavy falls of snow. On the 6th the snow, part of which had fallen during the previous month, lay a yard or more deep on the level and as much as 25 feet deep in drifts. A great storm began on the 18th, lasting until the 22nd, and setting in again on the 24th. The ground is said to have been buried 10 to 15 feet deep on the level, so that communication between farms and villages was almost completely suspended.

Cotton Mather has left us a long account of this snowstorm, in which he mentions, among other things, many remarkable cases of the survival of animals buried in the snow. Twenty-eight days after the storm more than a hundred sheep were found buried 15 feet deep, and two of these animals were still alive. Mather declares that they had subsisted on the wool of their dead companions! Two hogs were buried under the snow for twenty-seven days and survived. Hens were found alive in the snow after seven days and turkeys after five to twenty days.

Among the inhabitants of Medford, Mass., was a widow, who lived, with several children, in a one-story house on the road to Charlestown. Her house was so deeply buried that for several days it could not be found. At length smoke was seen issuing from a snow bank, and by that means its location was ascertained. Neighbors dug a passage to a window, by which they gained entrance. The woman's small stock of fuel was exhausted and she was burning her furniture to keep the household warm.

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