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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DRIFT-SNOW IN THE ANTARCTIC

The Byrd antarctic expedition has had some experiences with blizzards, but not so bad as those endured by Mawson and his companions several years ago in Adelie Land—the "home of the blizzard", and the windiest known region in the world, where, for months at a time, the only variation from gales is an occasional hurricane. The bitterly cold violent wind of this region is bad enough, but its effects are greatly aggravated by the load of fine snow, which cuts whatever it strikes in the manner of a sand-blast. For months, at Adelie Land, the air was never free from drift-snow. At times the drift was so dense that objects three feet away were obscured and the atmosphere seemed to be solid snow.

The snow both hardens and abrades objects with which it comes in contact. "Pillars of ice", says Mawson, "were cut through in a few days, rope was frayed, wood etched and metal polished. Some rusty dog chains were exposed to it, and in a few days, they had a definite sheen. A deal box, facing the wind, lost all its painted bands and in a fortnight was handsomely marked; the hard knotty fibres being only slightly attacked, whilst the softer, pithy laminae were corroded to a depth of an eighth of an inch." Even the rocks were etched by the snow into artistic patterns.

One effect of these driving clouds/<sup>of snow</sup>was to produce fine displays of St. Elmo's fire; more remarkable than any that have been reported elsewhere in the Antarctic.

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