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January 7, 1930.

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed December 31, 1929

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A FOREST ICE STORM

An ice storm in a forest may afford merely a beautiful spectacle or it may constitute a disaster, according to the thickness of the icy sheath that forms on twigs and branches from a downpour of rain. Men who have gone through the dangerous experience of dodging limbs and trees in an ice-stricken forest describe the sights and sounds on such occasions as among the most awe-inspiring in the whole repertory of nature.

If there is wind enough to wave the branches, the first noisy token of the storm is the clatter of icy fragments shaken down whenever two boughs strike together. Presently the smaller twigs and branches begin to break and fall. The low limbs of certain species sag until they rest on the ground, supporting the limbs above them. Lithe trees bend in graceful arches, and in some cases their tips become frozen to the soil.

When the major catastrophes begin treetops come crashing down with a noise like the breaking of glass, yet so loud as to make the woods resound. Towering pines topple over, carrying smaller trees with them. Secular oaks are uprooted. Sturdy trunks snap off. The whole forest seems crumbling into ruin. The din is unceasing, with a variety of sound that sweeps the diapason of a battlefield, from the rattle of musketry to the thunder of heavy artillery.

Trees have been wrecked by the hundreds of thousands in the worst of these disasters.

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21st and B Sts.,  
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