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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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ARCTIC ALASKA IN SUMMER

That the summers in the interior of Alaska, even north of the Arctic Circle, are warm, with occasional spells too hot for comfort, is a tolerably familiar fact, but this paradox does not extend to the northernmost part of the territory, bordering the Arctic Ocean. Here, as Miss E. M. Fitton tells us in a recent account of Alaskan climates, "winter conditions may be said to last the year round." At Barrow, so far as records go, no summer month has ever failed to produce at least a flurry of snow.

"Summer," writes Miss Fitton, "comes quickly, brought on by the rapid change in the length of the days. Then the coast reveals itself as a tundra area, flower and moss covered and very marshy, the still frozen ground below preventing proper drainage. Temperatures rise until a mean of about 45 degrees is attained in July and August, and maxima between 70 and 80 are recorded at Barrow."

The return of sunlight in this region is not so joyfully welcomed as might be expected. Archdeacon Stuck writes on this subject:

"The sun is absent in winter for two full months -- from the 21st of November to the 21st of January, which, of course, does not mean that daylight is totally absent, as some seem to think, but only that the sun is not seen. Conversely, in summer the sun does not leave the sky for two full months, and there is daylight all night for almost two months more. To most residents in these latitudes I think the perpetual sunshine is more trying than the darkness, for there are always three or four hours' daylight on the darkest days, but there is no escape from the glare of the sun; no kindly decent gloom for the hours of repose."

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