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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,  
Authority on Meteorology.

MOUNTAIN SNOWFALL

Everybody knows that a great deal of snow falls on mountains and that many lofty peaks are covered with snow the year round. As mountains do not continually grow in height on account of these deposits it is evident that the snow must be removed by natural agencies of some sort. What are they?

First, a very large amount of snow is removed by evaporation, which is an extremely active process at great altitudes. Second, a large part is melted and the resulting water flows in torrents and cataracts to the valleys below. Third, on many mountains much of the snow is gradually compacted to ice, which creeps slowly downward in the form of glaciers. Fourth, a good deal of snow is blown from the peaks and the upper slopes by the winds and eventually settles down at lower levels. Fifth and last, masses of snow lying on the mountainsides frequently become detached, for various reasons, and go sliding downward as avalanches.

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21st and B Sts.  
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