

A Science Service Feature

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§ WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

A LONDON FOG

The dense fogs so frequently reported this winter from the British Isles recall the period from December 27, 1813, to January 2, 1814, when, as recorded in the Annals of Philosophy, "a most extraordinary fog prevailed in London and seems to have extended a great many miles round in every direction. It was frequently so thick that it was impossible to see across the street; candles were burnt in most of the shops and counting-houses all day long. This fog condensed upon the grass, the trees and every wooden or iron railing. The grass was covered with a coating of snow at least half an inch thick. Below the trees in St. James's Park there lay a bed of snow an inch thick at least, which had fallen from them."

This so-called "snow" was evidently rime, formed by the freezing of under-cooled fog droplets drifting against solid objects, or settling upon them. The account goes on: "In London the thickness of the fog was still further increased by the smoke of the city; so much so, that it produced a very sensible effect on the eyes. But at a distance from the town, though there was no smoke, the fog was very thick. Not a breath of wind was perceptible during the whole week."

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21st and B Sts.,
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