

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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AVALANCHE WINDS

Describing Canadian avalanches, in his presidential address delivered many years ago before the American Society of Civil Engineers, Thomas C. Keefer said: "Remarkable effects are produced by the local hurricane induced by the swift avalanches. This sometimes extends for one hundred yards outside the course of the solid avalanche and is called the 'flurry' because it is clouded with particles of fine snow. If the course of the avalanche is diverted by some natural obstacle, the flurry drives on in the line of original motion, snapping off huge trees several feet in diameter at heights fifty feet or more above the ground without uprooting them. Some in the vortex of the flurry are uprooted, but the majority are cut short off, as they would be by chain-shot, and so far from the line of the avalanche that there is nothing to indicate the cause of their decapitation but the snow, impacted like moss against the windward side of their huge trunks. The flurry whirls upward to a height of one hundred feet above the descending snow, and forward in advance of it when under full headway, presenting a magnificent spectacle to an observer when at a safe distance."

When an avalanche came down the west side of the Jungfrau, in Switzerland, on May 1, 1879, the furious blast in front of it rushed across the valley below and prostrated trees on the opposite side three or four hundred yards from the end of the avalanche, while light snow was carried 2,000 yards farther.

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