

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

ICE IN THE TROPICS

Thanks to artificial refrigeration, ice is now as familiar in all civilized regions of the torrid zone as it is in high latitudes, and it is hard for us to realize that, a few generations ago, the vast majority of people in tropical countries had never seen any of it.

In the year 1833 the ship "Tuscany" took the first cargo of ice from Massachusetts to India. Samuel Eliot Morison, in his "Maritime History of Massachusetts," describes the bewilderment of the Hindus when this queer white stuff was landed at Calcutta. They placed their hands on the frigid blocks, hastily withdrew them when they experienced for the first time the sensation of cold, and excitedly jabbered questions at the ship's captain; asking, for example, whether ice grew on trees in his country. Those who bought it demanded their money back when the blocks of ice, left for a short time in the sun, melted away.

The industry of shipping ice from the lakes and ponds of New England to tropical countries, founded in 1805 by Frederic Tudor, was attended by numerous difficulties. Vessels had to be double-sheathed, lest the cargo melt. Various packing materials were tried for insulating the cakes of ice before pine sawdust was found to be the most suitable. An even greater difficulty was to educate the people of warm countries in the use of ice. At times Tudor gave it away to popularize cold drinks and thus build up a market. In Rio de Janeiro his agents promoted a factory for making ice cream in order to acquaint people with that delicacy.

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21st and Constitution Ave.
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