

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
August 18, 1932.

A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed August 11, 1932

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BIG HAILSTONES

Two or more pieces of ice, melting at the surface, placed in contact with one another, soon freeze into a single mass, even in a warm atmosphere. The process is called "regelation." Hailstones lying closely packed together on the ground may thus form lumps of almost any size. It is an open question whether regelation or sheer imagination is responsible for the tale of a hailstone as big as an elephant, said to have been found in southern India in the days of Tippoo Sahib. Then there is the block of ice 20 feet in its largest diameter alleged to have fallen at Dharwar, India, in 1838, and the piece "as big as a millstone" that Father Huc, the French missionary, reported to have fallen near his house in Mongolia about the same period.

Unfortunately, 99 per cent. of all the existing records of exceptionally big hailstones are vitiated by some degree of uncertainty as to whether the reported masses of ice fell as such or were formed by coalescence after falling. This statement applies to contemporary reports as well as to those of long ago. In recent years there have been several accounts published in newspapers and elsewhere of hailstones weighing 10 pounds or more, but meteorologists are skeptical about all of them. The actual limit of possible weight is uncertain, but probably does not exceed 5 pounds.

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