

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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BEN NEVIS SNOWS

If Ben Nevis, in Scotland, were a few hundred feet higher its summit would be blanketed at all seasons with a continuous layer of snow. The summit actually lies below the "climatic snow-line," but above the "orographic snow-line;" i.e., the level above which patches of perpetual snow are found in sheltered places. And thereby hangs a tale.

"This monarch of mountains," writes W.T. Kilgour, "is never entirely denuded of the white element. Time was - at least legend has it so - that the proprietary rights of the hill were regulated by snow. It is alleged that, by an ancient charter, the mountain was to revert to a prior owner if at any time the snow utterly disappeared from the gullies, and in an exceptionally hot summer the only white patch remaining had deteriorated to such an extent that retainers were despatched with materials to protect it from the rays of the sun. Whether this tale be fiction or no, it is probably safe to assert that there is no one in the present generation who can truthfully say that he failed at any time to discover some snow on Ben Nevis."

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