

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

A WYOMING DUST STORM

The dust storm that occurred over the plains of Wyoming on January 18 last was the most violent hitherto observed in that region, according to F.L. Disterdick, in charge of the Cheyenne Station of the U.S. Weather Bureau. Much damage was done by the mere force of the winds. The effects of the sand and dust are thus described:

"The small particles of the soil, consisting largely of decomposed granite, were caught up and some of it carried to great heights. The air near the surface was so completely filled with the sand that at times objects were invisible beyond 50 feet and headlights were used on automobiles. The larger particles, up to the size of walnuts, sent bouncing along the ground, caused large stock, some of which was injured, to stampede to shelter. Sheep could not stand up in the gale. The surfacing was removed from gravel roads and streets to the foundation. The soil in many plowed fields, in cases a foot deep, was removed to the gravel. Large windrows of sand were formed and many ditches filled. Great damage occurred to winter grain; much was blown out or covered with sand. Alfalfa also suffered in a similar manner. It is stated that the per cent. of abandoned winter grain will be the greatest ever known in the state.

"In some cases the sand blast stripped every particle of paint from the exposed parts of automobiles and so pitted the glass that not a piece could be seen through. All insulated objects became amazingly charged electrically. The ignition systems of automobiles were completely disrupted and hundreds of cars were stranded. The city engineer of Cheyenne states that the induced current was sufficient to start small electric motors.

"The anemometer pole at the weather station became so charged that it was impossible for one to touch the registering apparatus, indoors, without receiving a severe shock and it was necessary to ground the instrument.

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