

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SIFTING SNOWS

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One of the "joys" of wintering on a lofty mountaintop where the winds often blow with hurricane force is illustrated in Robert S. Monahan's recent book "Mount Washington Reoccupied," describing the experiences of the little party of weathermen who have lately been keeping vigil on New England's loftiest summit. The author's journal for a certain March day says:

"Considerable difficulty was experienced in keeping the snow out of the observatory, for it persisted in sifting through the narrowest cracks, especially those about the door. Upon turning out this morning we found a heavy mantle of snow upon many of our interior 'furnishings.' A thick felt was placed over the vestibule entrance to reduce the force of the wind-driven snow, but it continued to accumulate in a large drift more than a foot deep inside the door, for more snow would blow in than could be shoveled out. Blankets had to be draped around the radio bench and the observers' desk."

Similar experiences were familiar to the observers who occupied the famous observatory on Ben Nevis, in Scotland a generation ago. Though its granite walls were 12 feet thick, the "cauld blasts," laden with powdery snow, did not cease to penetrate the interior until after the building was completely blanketed in the deep snows of midwinter.

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