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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SNOW ROLLERS AGAIN

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Authority on Meteorology.

A clipping reaches me from Belle Center, Ohio, telling of a strong wind that lately rolled "snowballs as big as 10-gallon milk cans" in that vicinity. The comparison to milk cans is more apt than the term "snowballs," because the interesting formations known as "snow rollers" are more or less cylindrical; but they are generally hollowed out at the ends, so that they approximate the shape of a lady's muff. If the rolling occurs in several directions, as may happen in exceptional cases, the mass will be more nearly spherical. A photograph of perfectly ball-shaped snow rollers was published in a German journal, the Meteorologische Zeitschrift, in October, 1931.

The growth of a snow roller, under the action of the wind is no mystery, since every schoolboy has rolled snowballs for himself in snow of the proper consistency. The difficulty is to explain the formation of the initial mass; and not merely one such mass, but hundreds or thousands on the level surface of a snowfield, where the rollers often appear suddenly in great numbers. How this happened in one case was described five years ago by Wm. F. Gibbons, of State College, Pa., who reported in a letter to the New York Times:

"In a field near my home a soft, wet snow had fallen during the morning. Later a gust of wind hurled masses of snow from the limbs of trees and from wire fencing to the earth, where they were rolled by the wind into balls larger than a man's head. The field was level, the soft snow having fallen on icy masses of older snow that had lain during the winter. When the balls attained the size of a man's head, or a little larger, they seemed to be too big to be rolled by the force of the wind. But before they ceased to roll, small new masses of snow were flung from the top of the larger balls, which continued to roll in their turn in a somewhat regular path for several hundred yards until the wind seemed to have spent its force."

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