

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed November 4, 1935

THE TRUTH ABOUT SIMOOMS

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman
Authority on Meteorology

One of the latest and best American encyclopedias, in its article on the simoom, tells us that whole caravans are sometimes buried in the masses of sand carried by this desert wind. When the millennium arrives, encyclopedias will be divested of the thousands of loose, inaccurate and often absolutely fabulous statements that all of them now contain, and of which this is a fine example. Individual travelers have doubtless died of heat stroke and in some cases of suffocation in simooms, but it is unlikely in the extreme that whole caravans have ever thus perished. Plenty of books besides the one just mentioned have told the same story, but cautious meteorologists--Dr. Friedrich Umlauf, for example, in "Das Luftmeer," pronounce it a fable, and Prof. E.-F. Gautier, in his new ~~and~~ authoritative book on the Sahara, says: "Stories of caravans annihilated by the simoom belong strictly to the realm of the legendary."

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2101 Constitution Ave.
Washington, D.C.