
A Science Service Feature

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THE CRYSTALS OF ICE

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman
Authority on Meteorology

Ice crystals include those formed in the free air, as cloud and snow crystals; those deposited on the surfaces of terrestrial, objects as hoarfrost, rime, etc.; and those formed in bodies of water. The ice crystal is one of Nature's outstanding mysteries. All crystallization is mysterious, but the case of ice is the most remarkable because its crystals occur in a far greater variety of forms than do those of any other substance.

The microscopic study of ice crystals, especially as seen in snowflakes, began almost as soon as the microscope was invented, but the wealth of information we now possess concerning these fascinating objects has been obtained mainly since the beginning of the present century, with the aid of microphotography. One man--the late Wilson A. Bentley, who died December 23, 1931--probably photographed a greater number of different forms than have been pictured by the combined work of all other photographers. He left a collection of more than five thousand negatives, about half of which are represented in the marvelous album entitled "Snow Crystals," published a few weeks before his death.

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2101 Constitution Ave.,
Washington, D. C.