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A Science Service Feature

March 20

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE COMING OF SPRING

Spring made a false start this year arriving generally between February 3 and 5, and staying about a fortnight, or long enough to make spring floods and mud, start the grass, bring out some buds and pussy willows, enliven the birds, and inaugurate the marble and baseball seasons. This preliminary or tentative opening of spring was more than three weeks before the beginning of the first spring month, and about 6 weeks ahead of the start of astronomical spring, March 21.

While we all know how spring weather feels, we do not often stop to define it. It is the sort of weather that in a few days can arouse plant and animal life into spring activity. Investigators have found that the temperature has to average 6 degrees Centigrade or 43 degrees Fahrenheit or above for this to happen, and have called this temperature the physiological zero. Thus, we may say spring comes when a period of several days with the temperature averaging above 43 degrees Fahrenheit occurs.

The coming of spring and its staying are different matters. After the first mild spell there was as usual a good deal of freezing weather. Spring stays when the temperatures no longer fall sufficiently below the freezing point to kill the plant and animal life aroused by the earlier mild weather. This is essentially the date of last killing frost in spring.

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(Tomorrow: Winds and the Air Mail)

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