

No. 692

A Science Service Feature

July 30

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE HOTTEST EVER

The highest shade temperature ever "officially" recorded at the earth's surface was observed in September, 1922, at Azizia, Tripoli. On the 13th, with a clear sky and southwest wind, the temperature rose to 136.4 degrees Fahrenheit. This beats the previous record of 134.1 degrees Fahrenheit observed in Death Valley, California, in July, 1913. Dry regions near the edge of the tropics are usually hotter during the summer than the equatorial belt itself. Near the equator excessively high temperatures are rare because of the high humidity, with its consequent cloudiness and frequent rains. For nearly all the continents, the extreme of high temperature seems to be in the neighborhood of 130 degrees Fahrenheit. All the time the earth is tending to cool by radiation. The hotter a region becomes, the faster it radiates. At 135 degrees Fahrenheit radiation is 60 per cent. greater than at 75 degrees Fahrenheit. It is at about this point that the earth cools as fast as it can be heated by the most intense sunlight and the temperature can rise no farther.

(Tomorrow: Water Vapor)

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