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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CLIMATE AND COLDS

Before winter has fairly begun, colds and coughs are upon us. A recent study by the U. S. Public Health Service showed that on the average colds are most common though not necessarily most severe, in October. Toward the end of the month the incidence was nearly 300 per 1,000 among the persons reporting. A curious fact about the occurrence of colds is that the general trend appeared the same in all section, east, west, north, and south. Nearly everywhere the high incidence in the latter part of October was followed by a decline until the latter part of December when the rate averaged less than 150 per 1,000; then a sharp rise occurred bringing the average to 250 for the first half of January. One is inclined to inquire whether the Christmas holidays have a debilitating effect. From early January the frequency of colds declines rather steadily, although in most places the coldest weather occurs in late January and in some localities February is the most snowy month. The curve of incidence does not seem to be very closely controlled by local climate, as it is so similar in trend for climates so widely different as those of San Francisco, New Orleans and Chicago. New Orleans had as high a rate as many northern cities, but San Francisco showed a somewhat lower incidence throughout the winter, though paralleling the general trend, with a peak in January.

Pneumonia mortality shows a closer relation to climate. Pneumonia death rates are highest in the northeast where it is both cold and damp. Dampness alone, as in the south, or coldness alone, as in the Canadian northwest, is usually accompanied by low pneumonia mortality.

(Tomorrow: Theft of Ultra-Violet Light)
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